

# CULTURE AS EMBODIMENT



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## THE SOCIAL TUNING OF BEHAVIOR

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Theo Verheggen

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# Preface

At the beginning of the new millennium, when the tension between the Islamic East and the Christian West was high on the international agenda, one topic of conversation among scientists and politicians was clashing civilizations and conflicting cultures. In New York, London, and Madrid, in Copenhagen and The Hague, and more recently in Oslo and on Utøya, terrorist attacks and threats lugubriously illustrated how heavily societies are under pressure. Culture and religion were seen almost immediately as the culprits and for many people the two appeared virtually synonymous.

In this book we will pay attention to the relationships between culture and religion. Yet, our main focus will be on “culture.” When around 2008 terrorism was no longer the most important political issue but instead the worldwide financial crises had broken, the “culture of greed” among bankers and brokers, and in the European context also the national “culture of irresponsibility and laziness” in the south, were held responsible for much of the financial misery. Once more, culture was selected as the preeminent determinant of people’s behavior.

However, time and again it appears to be difficult for scientists, politicians, and social commentators alike to really make sense of culture, cultural differences, and cultural conflicts. That is remarkable in a way, because of the omnipresence of the term “culture” in speech and print, which suggests that it must have quite some explanatory power. Dissimilarities between people and problematic integration are quickly attributed to differences in culture. For instance, in the 1970s and 1980s, the multicultural Dutch society welcomed newcomers with the slogan that they could integrate while retaining their own culture. In real life, this turned

out to be a highly problematic task, since it proved to be very hard to establish what the culture of the newcomers entailed. But it was just as difficult for the Dutch to concretely establish what defines their own receiving culture (and what the Dutch identity demands from the newcomer).

Symptomatic of these challenges are the cases in which the culture of newcomers needs to be taken into account in a more formal, legal way. In an ethnic murder case, for example, the cultural background of the accused might be used as a claim for mitigation when someone's family honor is violated under the new circumstances. Dutch judges have struggled with this issue. It shows that culture is thought of as the totality of practices and convictions that are so closely tied to the person that it is very hard to get rid of them, or as the case may be, to change them. Problems arise when such a representation is used to justify unwanted behavior, as we will see in this book.

There are other instances that reveal a way of thinking about integration and the acquisition of a different set of cultural behaviors that is downright simplistic. When politicians demand that newcomers take an exam before they are permitted to settle in the host country, as is for instance the case in the Netherlands or Germany, the implicit assumption seems to be that a new culture can to a large extent be acquired from reading a book. According to this reasoning, sheer *knowledge* of the norms and values of a society may serve as the test that successful integration has taken place. We might wish that it would be that simple. Culture is by no means something that can be subtracted or added at will. Policymakers were forced to conclude that "integrating while retaining one's own culture" calls for a paradoxical task: to try and become *really* Dutch, German, British, American, and so on, while leaving intact the cultural self that was acquired in one's country of origin. In North European law courts it became clear every so often that referring to local codes of law did not prevent honor killings. Becoming culturally experienced in a new country or group is not simply a matter of *knowing* what one should do and *knowing* how to do it; it is foremost a matter of engaging in new practices, while one's existing practices and feelings, acquired in the society of origin, tend to persist – even if more "knowledge" about the host society is administered.

We will give practices due attention in this book. By practices we mean the behaviors that people carry out almost automatically in a characteristic manner. Walking, looking at others, talking, wearing clothes, gesticulating, and discussing are all examples of practices that people who belong to the same group acquire and express in a comparable manner.



Not only observable behavioral styles, but also feeling, taste, and preference become styled to an important extent in line with communal requirements and manners. In all these domains, the differences between members of different groups are clearly visible. A member of the upper echelons of society tends to have a distinct way of eating, handling a glass of wine, moving, talking, and so on. These behavioral patterns usually differ clearly from someone of the lower strata. It is the person's expressive body that is the preeminent indicator of the social circles in which she or he has been raised and has been living.

Based on such examples we might be tempted to surmise that the social milieu, the environment, or even the culture is responsible for the way the person moves and communicates. Yet, this is precisely the kind of suggestion we will argue against in this book. In our opinion, it is a misconception to believe that environments and cultures act upon people. It is only people who act upon other people; there are no other entities or structures that truly determine people's behavior. In this regard, we are in clear opposition to the common view in sociology that social structures organize behavior, and that thereby leaves out the acting individual. We argue that it does not suffice to say that culture is the cause of differences between people. On the contrary, it is "culture" itself that needs to be understood. The concept and its use need to be dissected, to analyze what exactly it is we talk about when we say that this or that behavior is a matter of culture.

An obvious question to be answered is how people learn to act in accordance with what is common within their group. To begin with, "acting," "in accordance with," "group," and "common" are terms that need further clarification, no matter how familiar they may sound. In Part One, we will deal with these terms in detail. We will focus particularly on the crucial role of the human body. The body (oftentimes reduced to the brain) is never an isolated machine, as seems to be assumed in so many current neuropsychological approaches to human functioning. It is always related to other bodies – to other persons, that is – as the joint bearers and co-producers of all sorts of meanings. We will show that participation in the practices of the group to which one belongs is anything but noncommittal. Rather, again and again people can be observed to act naturally and authentically in accordance with what is prevalent in the group, explicitly but also implicitly. The unobtrusive learning and the self-evident expression of what is considered proper within the boundaries of one's own community are of special importance. Such implicit normativity is often overlooked in prescribing cultural exams and in establishing what is successful integration. A *feeling* for the situation or a *sense* of

what is proper behavior at a given moment cannot be gained from instructions alone. In many social situations, one can only learn from experience what is considered to be right and what is not. This involves enduring practice, with all its mistakes; and by being continuously corrected by experts in the situation one may finally gain mastery. Especially in delicate situations in which a “proper” tone or a “right” attitude make all the difference, behavioral mismatches and incompatibilities of style quickly become problematic. Invoking an abstract notion of “culture” is of little use in these circumstances.

In the chapters that follow, we proceed from the assumption that the most viable way to deal with such problems is to focus on the way in which people’s actions, thoughts, and feelings are mutually shaped and styled within the community they are part of. A well-trained observer learns to identify characteristic patterns, which can be found in all areas of life. That is why we will use the notion of behavioral patterns so explicitly in this book. Without most people realizing it, those patterns are the result of ongoing practice and training, which also makes these patterns (practices) so resistant to change. As an example, one might try to lose the accent typical of the group one has been raised in. It is a very tough task, surely, in the long run. Yet, we all know that such a minor thing as having an accent is hardly without social consequences. It illustrates the persistence of the behavioral patterns that we will deal with.

Part One is about the way in which persistent patterns of behavior come into being. We will show that these patterns become almost tangible when the body, the feelings, and the behaviors of individual people become mutually styled and tuned within their community. People embody, also in a literal sense of the word, what is current and common in the group. This styling results from participation in the practices that characterize a group. We have devised an analytical toolkit, a set of psychological perspectives on how people acquire styles in close relation to the behavior of their parents, peers, and important others. Our tools include, among other things, a focus on bodily practices in the intrinsic social group, with an emphasis on “automaticities” and on the social tuning of feeling. For cases where there is a mismatch between acquired routines and practices and what is demanded because of changes in one’s social situation, we have created a new research perspective that focuses on so-called “cultural arrests.”

Topical issues that involve cultural patterning can be found in Part Two. It is the *proof of the pudding* in which our analytical perspective on “culture” is applied to five domains of human affairs that are, in our view, crucially important in any society. These domains pose fundamental prob-

lems to human interactions, and every society must find solutions for them, as it were, in terms of behavioral patterning. The five domains cover, respectively, relations between men and women, relations between people with a high social status and those with a lower social status, relations between adults and youngsters, relations between people of one's own group and outsiders, and finally relations between religious believers and people who are not. In all these domains we will demonstrate how behavioral patterns typify the interactions and how in some cases persistent patterns can lead to unpleasant intra- and intercultural confrontations.

In Part Three we present a psychological view on globalization. We argue that behavioral practices and lifestyles have begun to resemble each other worldwide, particularly in urban areas. Western patterns of behavior seem to be especially appealing to others. We investigate where this appeal comes from. At the same time, however, we contend (and we are certainly not the first to do so) that globalization or modernization is not the same as Westernization, but is the result of an already long history of continual behavioral exchanges between the West and other parts of the world. In that context, we attempt to correct ideas of Western superiority in terms of behavioral, political, and moral accomplishments. We offer a more balanced global perspective, inspired much more by Spinoza's radically enlightened views than by the standard story of Western Enlightenment.

It should be clear that this book is not about multicultural issues *per se*. "Culture" is always at play whenever people act together. However, the notion of "culture" itself is often applied so thoughtlessly that it has not been very helpful in understanding why and how people do what they do, within a community of others who perform things in a similar manner. An important adage of the book is that any explanation one gives for the behavior of other people ought to also clarify why one's own behavior does or does not fit that very same explanation.

Paul Voestermans and Theo Verheggen, 2013

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# Part One

## Towards a New Psychology of Culture

*Culture as Embodiment: The Social Tuning of Behavior*, First Edition.

Paul Voestermans and Theo Verheggen.

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# Understanding Culture

Time and again research reveals that we expose ourselves to all kinds of dangers because of our unhealthy behavior. Many people live unhealthy lives and the negative effects have been scrutinized, even up to chemical reactions in the uterus. But to no avail – people still drink too much alcohol, they eat too much, and they smoke too much. And all this happens from an early age onward. People keep taking drugs, keep gambling, continue to take too much medicine, and they fail to exercise enough while trying to maintain their body weight in a rather unhealthy fashion. There is plenty of research into the biological causes and effects of these behaviors. Eric Nestler and Jennifer Chao (2004) in the United States and Arnt Schellekens and colleagues (2012) in the Netherlands are well known for their research into the biology of addiction. They have studied the dopamine system in particular. Some drugs increase the level of the neurotransmitter dopamine, leading to extraordinarily pleasant experiences. After the peak in dopamine production there is a fall that often reaches beyond the normal level. At that point, the need for a new peak experience is high, leading to a pattern of addiction. Scientists also know a great deal about the cognitive processes behind all kinds of addiction. It is well known, for instance, that women in particular (though not all of them, of course, and including a significant number of men) are prone to eat too much because they may have difficulty controlling their emotions and seek refuge in food. Tatjana van Strien and colleagues

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(2012) have studied all kinds of myths regarding dieting. Her research has shown that it is time for a cognitive psychological approach to destructive eating habits. Such behavioral patterns are usually about finding a solution for depression and feelings of dissatisfaction. Eating is not the answer, then, but identifying the origins of the depression often does provide the solution.

As much as we may know about the dangers of unhealthy behavior and its biological underpinnings, when it comes to changing the behavioral patterns that have such devastating effects, often we can only admit that we just do not understand why people remain so committed to them. Consider for a moment the numerous public campaigns in the European Union and the United States against smoking. Despite all the measures to prohibit people from smoking, and despite all the knowledge that children and adolescents have of its detrimental effects, smoking continues to be a common habit for many adolescents and adults. The persistence appears not only to depend on the biological phenomenon of addiction. Otherwise far *fewer* people would have quit smoking in the past decades in many Western countries. But knowledge and awareness of the effects of smoking do not appear to be sufficient safeguards either. Otherwise, we might have expected many *more* people to have quit.

It is easily overlooked, then, that individual behavior depends to a great extent on what is common or habitual in people's social circles, and less on what a person may consciously choose or know. Behavior becomes stylized or shaped in the community that we are part of. What goes on *between* individuals is therefore crucial. Acquiring habits is an *interactive* affair and certainly not the mere result of processes going on in the single organism alone. Moreover, it is extremely difficult to detach oneself from such habits once acquired. People find it hard to change their daily routines, since these have often become largely automated practices within the community that they are part of. People believe in their ways of doing things and are committed to them. These practices grant a face to the group, as well as to its individual members.

Usually, it is not until we change our cultural environment that we realize how natural and self-evident our everyday patterns of behavior are. We become aware of the persistence of our behavioral patterns when we get cut off from the group in which this behavior became shaped in the first place. Going to university, for example, and leaving behind the group of peers we grew up with makes us aware of the patterns we have adopted in the past. Uneasy feelings arise once we notice that our customary practices no longer fit in the new environment. We then not only

realize how self-evident and fully automated our learned routines are; we also become aware of the extreme difficulty of giving up established patterns, even if there is no addiction involved.

What is true for health is also true for other domains in life in which interaction between people results in established patterns that we are largely unaware of. Living with newcomers is a good example. Every nation has immigrants, either from former colonies, or because they entered the workforce in order to perhaps obtain a better life. In some countries, non-native workers are actively recruited from the poorer regions of the world. In the Netherlands, for example, young men from Morocco's Rif Mountain region and from Turkey's Anatolia were press-ganged into participating in the booming Dutch postwar economy by taking low-income jobs. A new meeting ground for cultural groups was born, but this was at the same time fertile ground for conflicts. When habits and customs of different people "clash," it generally turns out to be very difficult for them to get along well. It is the nature of the automatic actions and habits on both sides that sometimes make it difficult to deal with people who have grown up elsewhere, no matter how positive the initial intentions are. Good intentions alone do not change practices.

## **Cultural Confrontations**

In liberal European countries such as Sweden, Denmark, and the Netherlands, which used to have a long tradition of openness toward people who had to flee from their homelands in search of a safe haven, or in Germany, which vowed after World War II to never again exclude people on the basis of their race, it appears to be ever more difficult for people to live with those who originate from other cultures. The Dutch, for example, initially seemed to have few problems with foreign workers. As so-called "guest workers" they were received in a rather positive manner as long as their numbers were relatively small and as long as they would return home as soon as they had earned enough money. However, life is full of surprises, even for governments, and the improving economic situation tempted these young men to stay. Moreover, they wanted to bring their families over, which resulted in a second generation of immigrants who were born in the Netherlands.

From then on, the Dutch experienced a totally new confrontation with the behavior of others. It was no longer just submissive guest workers who claimed to belong there, but also their offspring, who were



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much more inclined to demand their share in society. Serious problems started to occur when it became apparent that the guest workers and their families were continuing to exhibit the behavioral styles that were prevalent in the completely different circumstances of their homelands. Initially, policies aimed to incorporate all these different styles into the model of a multicultural society. We are currently witnessing the open admission of countries like the Netherlands and Germany that this multicultural project has failed dramatically. No matter how opportunistic one might have thought, or may continue to think, the multicultural ideal, part of the problem was that persistent patterns of behavior on the part of the newcomers met resistance on the part of the native Western Europeans. Since most of the guest workers and their families were not inclined (or encouraged by Westerners) to give up their marriage customs, for example, or their style of bringing up children, it proved particularly difficult to give these new citizens the feeling that they belonged to their new societies. Many of them maintained their traditional ways in which male authority was exerted or in which religious guidance was accepted.

Initially, as long as the guest workers were prepared to do hard work from a modest and subordinate position in society, they posed no serious problems. However, when the newcomers, and especially their children, gained relative wealth, and when their growing numbers became visible in the public sphere, the expected compliance to the behavioral patterns that were dominant, or at least common, in northwest Europe became a source of tension. By then, it was already too late. Habits, sentiments, and language – especially those of so-called “second-generation immigrants” – were persistently molded in a neo-Rif or a neo-Anatolian fashion. And some adolescents proved to be particularly skilled in displaying their typical identities in public; not merely physical appearance, complexion, and hairstyle, but also a way of dressing, from headscarves to hooded sweaters, became the signposts of these new identities.

Differences in background fueled growing feelings of insecurity and discomfort: Guest workers were too cheap, had a strange religion, did not speak the national language well enough, did not adapt sufficiently to Dutch practices but clung too much to their own culture. Indeed, in the early 1980s, European nations such as the Netherlands had declared that their societies were now multicultural ones in which newcomers should be able “to integrate while maintaining their own culture,” so the popular slogan ran. From 1990 onward, public and political debate started to acknowledge the failure of this maxim, and increasingly demanded that immigrants exchange their culture for the norms and values of their

receiving country. However, this required these countries to define their own cultural norms and values, which proved to be troublesome.

This became clear, for example, in the context of a special scientific report on these matters that appeared in the Netherlands (Wetenschappelijke Raad voor het Regeringsbeleid 2003); it offered very little clarification for either the Dutch or the newcomers. Nevertheless, it was apparent that the “culture card” was being played by both sides with equal fervor. The social problems were the result of clashing cultures. Too many immigrants did not support the guest country’s norms and values and that situation needed to be corrected. In the Netherlands, therefore, at the beginning of the new millennium, newcomers as well as old immigrants had to take a brief language course with an exam. This included a test on Dutch history (of which the Dutch themselves have notoriously little knowledge), and they also had to be able to explain what to do in typical daily situations such as applying for financial assistance or asking directions. Notwithstanding the fact that the Dutch themselves could not make their own norms and values clear and explicit, it was believed to be the fault of the newcomers that they did not live up to them.

### Persistent practices

To be sure, it helps when newcomers understand and speak the local language. And it helps if they understand how social life in the receiving country is organized. But the problem is that policymakers as well as the general public perceived that “culture” would do the trick. Moreover, culture was believed to be the totality of norms, values, history, language, and so on that could all be processed mentally. Newcomers, then, should simply switch from their current mindset to one that fitted the Dutch (or whatever other) society. Hence, a course and an exam would probably suffice. The persistence with which behavioral routines become gradually shaped within one’s own group, including the shaping of the sentiments and tastes that go along with these practices, was completely overlooked here. Persistence did not seem an issue at all. Integration was believed to be above all an intellectual affair in which predominantly written material could be used to make explicit the required behaviors that should replace the existing ones.

Yet, if we simply try to change our accent or our posture when we walk, it is immediately clear how difficult it is to change persistent behavioral patterns once acquired. It requires a lot of training to change our styles, and because those styles have become invested with effort and design, they have also become invested with feelings and normativity: It is *my* style of

doing, this is how *we like it*, or it is how things are *usually* done around here. Hence the normativity of practices does not reside in mental representations of those practices. It resides in the doing or the practice itself. Therefore, scientists were not very successful in making explicit what the typical local norms and values were. Cultural forms of behavior and feeling need to be acquired through training, not through mere reading or instruction. We will return to this point later in the book.

To sum up, a misconception of what cultural behavior entails proved to be devastating for the successful integration of immigrants into their chosen society. Those who succeeded did so because they participated in the practices of, for example, the Dutch, the Germans, or the Danes. Too many immigrants and their families were left to themselves for too long. As a consequence, they simply kept doing what they were accustomed to doing. As a result, within three decades, conspicuously different cultural patterns were able to grow within the European nations. But these patterns should not be understood as merely mental or propositional. They are above all practices, embodied social forms of doing and feeling, which are inherently persistent. Pierre Bourdieu (1980) referred to such embodied normative practices as the “habitus.” Therefore, we will argue, we should primarily understand “cultural conflicts” in terms of practices that are out of sync; not as mere mental representations that are incompatible. Unfortunately, it is usually much harder to change an embodied practice than it is to change ideas. That is already one important lesson for policymakers, journalists, and the general public.

## Misconceptions of Culture

All too often scientists have understood culture as a force, as a variable, and as a predominantly mental affair. Many psychologists, for instance, have argued that people somehow “internalize” the cultural patterns and codes of their group. In this first part of the book we argue that this approach is wrong. Let us turn first to some serious misunderstandings about the idea of culture in the behavioral sciences.

### The improper use of culture as a label

We have already mentioned the vast amount of knowledge about the internal neurochemical monitoring of behavior. Yet, notwithstanding the volume of all our life-science knowledge, we are still left empty-handed when we face the undeniable experiences that some behaviors seem

impossible to correct. Just think of our earlier examples: unhealthy behavior, failing to accept other people's habits, clinging to dysfunctional habitual practices or to routines that do not seem to fit new circumstances. Suddenly, there appear to be factors at work that are not subject to the fine-grained network of scientific research, knowledge, and methods. All too often, then, man's ever-present fallibility is invoked. Or it is argued that man is a group animal, that the flesh is weak, that people always tend to do evil, and so forth. Instead of undertaking thorough research into what makes people so inert and uncorrectable, the explanation put forward is "natural tendencies." Or, at the other extreme, a whole culture is held responsible, even though it is immediately evident that not every member of the cultural group displays the challenged behavior.

Culture, then, is used as a general label for a vast array of behaviors. The reasoning is as follows: In order to come to grips with the behaviors that are unlike our own, we label them as originating in a different culture. This may seem a pretty straightforward claim, but it obscures any further understanding of what underpins that behavior. First, such labeling discourages us from searching for a more precise source of the behavioral patterns. After all, culture already appears to be the explanation. Second, labeling that suggests a monolithic culture obscures the often very diverse histories within the cultural group. This tends to paper over the diversity originating from the multifaceted process of the group's identity formation. It obscures the fact that some people in the group have freed themselves from history's legacy, while others remain prisoners of an unhappy course of events. This can result in their respective identities being linked each in a different way with a common heritage. Within a given cultural group, there generally exist a variety of ways in which the challenges of changing circumstances are handled. Cultural labeling is not sensitive to the fact that within a given cultural group some stick to the traditional legacy – historical or otherwise – and some adapt to the new circumstances and leave tradition behind.

We now elaborate on the first point: a more precise search for underpinnings. Patriarchic relations between people, discrimination, and intimidation of women are unquestioned in some groups. Such a community often reveals patterns of behavior in which sexual violence is omnipresent. That behavior is strongly interwoven with other, acquired, practices in the group. If we use culture as a label, notwithstanding the obvious fact that the behavior originates in a distinct group of practitioners, we don't see the dynamics of the situation. Instead, we follow the habit of positioning "them" to "us" – the culture of the Turks, the Inuit, the American

Indian, the African American, and so on against the dominant social groups. What needs to be understood, however, is how behaviors and feelings of individuals become attuned to the accepted and self-evident practices in the group. At first sight, some Moroccan boys one may encounter in the streets of Dutch cities, just like gang members everywhere else, seem to be preoccupied with “respect.” It is tempting to label this preoccupation as typical of the culture of these boys, whether it is Moroccan in the Dutch situation, Indian or Pakistani in Britain, African or Latin American in the United States, and so forth. But a generic label such as a Moroccan or Indian “culture” obscures the fact that the boys’ behavior does not so much result from a personal evaluation of respectful interaction with others, but from expectations that relate to patterns of masculine behavior in the group.

Practices such as intimidation and imposing a pecking order in the group, displays of physical power and prowess, showing off verbal skills, being streetwise, and making clear to bystanders who is the boss – these are all part of the behavioral patterns that these boys have grown accustomed to. These practices are in no way restricted to a culture as a whole, but rather to a particular group. It is therefore counterproductive to say that their behavior is simply due to “their” culture, just as it is unproductive to put it down to personal characteristics. Above all, their behavior is significant with respect to what happens between the group members in terms of expectations, obligations, habits, and so on. Any new member has to tune into these practices. It is not a Moroccan, or Turkish, or African, or Indian, or Latin, or African American culture as such that should be held responsible.

We turn to the second point: Cultural labeling also obscures the often diverse origins of typical patterns of behavior. We can illustrate this with another example from the situation in the Netherlands. Boys and girls who originate from families that once immigrated from another country may form a group for that very reason. Using culture as a label to classify them would be a natural reflex, because of what is obvious and visible: a skin color, a way of dressing, a hairstyle, a way of walking and talking, and all sorts of behavioral styles that are at odds with the styles that the majority of people in the receiving country display. However, as soon as one gets to know these youngsters as individuals, every single person has his or her own story. The label “Moroccan” becomes fragmented. It becomes evident that it hides a diverse history, far less monolithic than the culture label would suggest.

The label does not reveal, for example, that most of these young people originate from families that used to live in rural areas such as in the Rif

Mountains. These regions had an ambivalent relationship with the Moroccan nation, because of their long history of resistance and war against Spain, then France, but eventually also against their own Moroccan kings. Their forbears often lived far from the big cities. They are often Berbers (or Imazighen, to be more precise) and in some other cases they belong to the Arabic Berbers who again have their own peculiar history within Morocco.

It is obvious that these particular histories may enable some youngsters to identify themselves as offspring of the anti-colonial freedom fighters, for example. In some cases, that awareness may even activate very specific sentiments that lead some young men to think that resistance and a readiness to fight are still required. It may make them more prone to seek military training, for example, and to join fights that are revived for various reasons in the name of Allah; particularly when they encounter hostility and a neglect of their identity in the Netherlands. But neither this hostility, nor their involvement in identity policies, is a general cultural thing. It is something specific, applying to youngsters who may deliberately activate this militant identification with a very remote past, of which they have no direct experience. Simply setting them apart as Moroccans, as some politicians continue to do as soon as they cause trouble, may have the paradoxical result that these boys deliberately start to identify themselves as a Moroccan group. Then, any nuance in the origins of their behavioral patterns is gone, on both sides.

Thus, by labeling typical patterns of behavior as manifestations of someone's culture, we flatten the constitutive as well as the historical richness of these behavioral patterns. Such oversimplification should be avoided in a behavioral account at all times. But there is also a compelling logical error in labeling typical behavior as cultural behavior. If we observe all kinds of behaviors in others, classify them, and label them as "culture X," we cannot subsequently invoke "culture X" as an explanation for these behaviors. We may identify this as a category mistake: "Culture X" cannot explain the typical behaviors that the label "culture X" derived from in the first place. That is putting the cart before the horse: A label cannot be a cause. Therefore, culture cannot be a cause of behavior. It is at best just that: a label for patterns of behavior.

### The improper use of culture as a metaphor

In the social sciences, there is much speculation about the dynamic interplay of the individual and his or her environment. Usually, culture is regarded as being a domain of its own, somehow in opposition to

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individual wants and needs. Such a general understanding of culture as a force of its own is detrimental to a proper understanding of behavioral patterning. Again, some serious misunderstandings are involved. The most important one is the idea that culture as some mysterious force actually molds and shapes people and their behavior, ideally into well-adjusted individuals, but sometimes also into rigid and stubborn ones. But, as we have just argued, culture cannot be a cause of behavior. Throughout history, nevertheless, culture has often been associated with minorities that seemed unwilling to become part of the bigger social whole – precisely because of their different culture. Such ideas may cause the government of a country to withhold investment in people who belong to minority groups. It may result in minorities being forced to be passive. It may even be the case that entire civilizations are placed in opposition to one another. Samuel Huntington depicts cultures metaphorically as massive tectonic plates that are on the brink of colliding (1993: 22):

It is my hypothesis that the fundamental source of conflict in this new world will not be primarily ideological or primarily economic. The great divisions among humankind and the dominating source of conflict will be cultural. Nation states will remain the most powerful actors in world affairs, but the principal conflicts of global politics will occur between nations and groups of different civilizations. The clash of civilizations will dominate global politics. The fault lines between civilizations will be the battle lines of the future.

The phenomenon that Huntington addresses includes conflicts between the eight civilizations that exist today: Western, Chinese-Confucian, Japanese, Hindu, Slavic-Orthodox, Islamic, Latin American, and African (see Figure 1.1).

But when Huntington tries to explain why these civilizations come to oppose one another, we get a fairly speculative story about how “existing identities” have been anchor points throughout history (see also his theory as elaborated in Huntington 1996). These anchor points no longer provide a firm grip on people’s situations because of rapid global changes. Differences turn into rigid barriers and it becomes evident that the local elites, which used to adhere to Western ideologies with their promise of an ideal state, have become disillusioned by the West’s policies for tackling misery, poverty, and loss of direction. They then cling to religion, mixed with nationalism and a meager form of socialism. This amalgam offers some compensation, according to Huntington. Sometimes the final result is totalitarian, which in most cases means Islamist politics.





**Figure 1.1** Samuel Huntington's eight civilizations.

Some religious groups hark back to the glory days, for instance when Islam was established. The main message, then, is that Islam is the solution to all problems and therefore it should be brought back to prominence, with force or violence when necessary. Islamism in Egypt is a well-known example. The foundation of the Muslim Brotherhood there in 1928 marked the modern beginnings of such struggles. Islamism essentially has no other desire than to build a strong Islamic or in some cases a strong theocratic Islamist state that cares for the poor and that restores feelings of national pride. The Brotherhood gained some momentum from the totalitarian and utopian movements that were so widespread in the West between the two world wars. Apart from this subversive group in Egypt, other parts of the Middle East have embraced broadly similar domestic political ideals, notably Iran. At the time of writing, the Taliban in Afghanistan and Pakistan are still involved in a similar project. Saudi Arabia and Pakistan have been Islamist for a long part of their history, even though both maintain an orientation to the West, albeit a troubled one.

We do not want to argue that Huntington's ideas are of no interest at all. Yet, these kinds of explanations tend to lose sight of the real people who become entangled in such movements and in their predominant behavioral patterns. It is no longer clear how real people become subject to those in charge. In other words, we still do not have a true understanding of what motivates individuals in their daily behaviors. Saying that they are being steered by culture is like saying that a flock of birds steers



every individual bird in the proper direction. It requires only brief reflection to see that “culture” is of course not the operating force, just as the flock is not the operating force behind the movements of the individual birds. And yet time after time it is claimed that culture really is a cause, and that culture truly exerts force on individuals. In reality, however, only individuals are truly operative entities. Therefore, we argue once more, culture does not explain human conduct; culture is what needs to be examined further.

Huntington appears to know very well what is at stake for the future. He argues in terms of clashes and fault lines between civilizations. It is strong language, using metaphors that are reminiscent of the devastating Asian tsunami on Boxing Day 2004, or that in Japan in March 2011. But what exactly clashes in Huntington’s outlook on present-day affairs? One may expect geologists to be able to explain a tsunami in clear geological terms: A massive earthquake in the ocean causes the sea bottom to be elevated by a few meters, thrusting the sea upward, and a giant wave sweeps across the ocean, turning into an enormous wall of water as soon as it reaches the shallow shore. The destruction caused by the huge wave is indescribable. There is no misunderstanding about what caused it.

Shouldn’t we expect cultural scientists to give equally detailed accounts when they speak of civilizations that “clash” like tectonic plates? Or does the use of metaphors reveal that these experts do not really know what causes so much trouble between “cultures” – that is to say, between people? In this case, metaphors are indeed a cover-up. It is more honest to say that we do not understand precisely what happens when radical Islam appears to be the sudden enemy of the West in a number of places in the world. The metaphor of “clashing civilizations” does not explain much. What is needed instead is appropriate research, to try to find out the latent mechanisms behind the observed phenomena. Those guesses, for that is what they are, subsequently need to be tested as rigorously as possible. Therefore, let us see no metaphors in culture theory, but real phenomena and attempts to fully understand them.

### The improper use of culture as an excuse

Reifying culture as an entity that actually does something to people results in serious misconceptions. Even the most shallow consideration of what the media have to say about people from different regions of our planet makes it immediately apparent that all sorts of power differences and

gender differences are being maintained and cultivated by using culture as the final cause, or even as a final excuse. If a girl is killed because she has violated her family's honor, or if boys are preferred over girls as family members, or even if women's reproductive organs are mutilated, the culture card is quickly played as the ultimate explanation. The ubiquitous suggestion is that it is their culture that produces these patterns of behavior. Also bear in mind that this suggestion is used selectively by certain groups. They use culture as an excuse to serve their own particular interests.

Whenever culture is too readily used as a cause, or even an excuse, for the prolongation of certain behavioral patterns, we need to be alert to the possibility that there are subgroups in society whose interests are served by these behavioral patterns. Most uses of culture as an excuse are highly questionable. Examples include the justification of female circumcision, or honor killings. To justify sexual intimidation or obnoxious machismo in terms of a Mediterranean temperament is equally questionable. Yet, also, when the social poverty of some members of the majority in a First-World country is explained as having a simple or "folk" origin, this implies invoking culture as an excuse. Likewise, present-day bankers who justify some of their own or their colleagues' behaviors in terms of the "culture of greed" that is omnipresent in the day-to-day practices of Wall Street's rich and famous imply culture as an excuse. We should rigorously reject the validity of such an argument and at least ask who will benefit from deploying it.

The broad term "culture" is unsuited to characterizing a whole society. Behavioral patterns of whatever sort are always tied to a specific group, which excludes a general use of "culture" *as such*. Behavioral patterns are first of all the result of what people establish mutually within the group. This precludes an analysis of behavioral patterns in terms of a blueprint or a mold for people's behavior that is supplied by a supra-individual entity referred to as culture. For instance, especially in a world troubled by religious conflict, it is mandatory to analyze behavioral patterns in a balanced way, and to scrutinize those patterns that maintain and enhance religious sentiments. But how should we proceed if culture as such does not do anything, and if we reject metaphors and mystifying treatises, but instead want to describe the processes that are truly relevant? First of all, we have to devise useful means to assess what goes on *between* people. In doing so, the omnipresent dichotomy between the individual on the one hand and culture on the other should be avoided at all costs. It has proven to be counterproductive.

## Beyond *Homo Clausus*

It is a truism to say that when it comes to explaining behavior, we currently live in the age of brains and genes. Through new types of imaging techniques, we discover how much the brain is involved in all that we do. The hopes are high that eventually (soon) the duality between body and mind may be overcome by uncovering the mind as essentially brain. According to some social scientists, cooperation between neurobiology, neuropsychology, evolutionary biology, and evolutionary psychology will eventuate in the claim that social behavior will be available for discovery *in* the brains of individuals. “Mirror” neurons (neurons that fire in two cases: when the actor does something and when he or she sees someone else doing it), “von Economo” neurons (diversely branched neurons that are found in hominids, some mammals, and humans, enabling complicated cognitive reactions), and brain modules for language and cooperation definitely suggest this is the case. Social behavior would then need no further explanation.

In the pages that follow, we take a different route. It seems that if we proceed along the lines of these optimistic brain specialists we run into trouble. For, in this way, science tends to end up with a *homo clausus*, a single human being in a closed body in which all sorts of metabolic, mechanical, chemical, hormonal, and neural reactions take place that are also responsible for people’s interactive proceedings. To be sure, without a physical body, there will be no behavior at all. And, apart from the body, there is no agent that can be deemed responsible for the production of behavior. That is obvious. But the fact that all behavior can be described in terms of body chemistry does not imply that what goes on inside each separate brain or organism explains it all. What much of contemporary science tends to lose is a perspective on the *relational* and *expressive* body, in interaction with other, equally relational and expressive, bodies. We will argue that it is precisely in these relational interactions between embodied persons that the social and persistent styling of behaviors, meanings, feelings, and also of the body itself comes about. The workshop, so to speak, where the characteristic patterns of behavior originate that we often refer to as cultural behavior, is to be found in the mutual tuning of behavior, and not solely within people’s heads.

Of course, without brains and genes and hormones, human behavior would be impossible. But while we try to benefit from the findings in biology and neuroscience, we do not think that social behavior in all its complexity is merely a matter of physical events in a locked-up individual

brain. We will attempt to show instead how the mutual tuning of embodied persons within five major domains provides the origin of our most individual experiences, feelings, language, meanings, thoughts, and actions. If we succeed in doing so, we will gain a theory of culture alongside it for free.

## **Five Key Domains of Patterned Behavior**

In this book we identify five crucial domains that every group, every people, or every region has to deal with: gender, status, age, us/them, and religion. The behavior of individuals follows typical patterns in these domains, although individuals in the group may not bring those patterns forth consciously or deliberately. The patterned behaviors are virtually automatic, as we will see. Nevertheless, they play a crucial role in regulating the oppositions between, for instance, men and women, or youngsters and the elderly.

From now on, when we speak of “culture” or of “cultural” behavior, we mean it in a purely referential and descriptive sense. That is to say, we use it to refer to typical regularities that can be observed in the behavioral repertoire of real people in real groups. That behavior may visibly differ from the behavior of other real people in the same group, or of those in another group. Particularly in the latter case, the label “culture” or its adjective may come in handy to describe the observed behavioral patterns. It should be perfectly clear, however, that we never mean or imply that culture is somehow an agency or a force that causes behavior or that causes behavioral differences.

We discuss the five domains in depth through Part Two. Chapter 4, about men and women, gives us an opportunity to demonstrate the relevance of our psychological approach of culture to sex and gender. Both sex and gender are subject to fairly wild speculation about the predominant role of nature or “biology” with respect to the origin of sexual practices and gender differences. Sex often appears to be completely determined by biology. For example, male sexual violence is said to be largely the result of the amount of testosterone in the blood; and the reason that most women eventually long for children is simply due to the ticking of their biological clock. Yet sex and gender involve much more than just this single body full of hormones, tubes, fluids, and firing neurons. In courtship behavior and in the maintenance of intimate relations, persistent patterned behaviors are crucial. The full body is present here as an indispensable expressive device, but tied to the behavioral

patterns in the group that one is part of. In this domain we run into all sorts of established patterns that may obstruct or facilitate interpersonal relations. Men are often resolved, when they visit another couple together with their own wife, to have a conversation with the other man's spouse as well as with the man. Yet, what happens? Before they know it, the chats are sex-specific and not cross-gendered at all. Many men really would like to have a friendly relationship with a woman, but very often the patterns that involve sexual behavior get in the way and appear to be the stronger ones. Can we truly say that it is only biological reactions at work here, or is it also a matter of persistent patterns that originate from the group we belong to?

Chapter 5 examines status, wealth, and power, focusing on dominance and dependence. Powerlessness is a worldwide phenomenon in which the "hidden injuries of class" – as Richard Sennett and Jonathan Cobb (1972) expressed it eloquently in their book of the same title – are often understood in terms of culture. Yet, those injuries are not the result of people being victims of a culture of poverty. Rather, they reveal how much poverty is the consequence when people are tied to behavioral patterns that keep them firmly fixed within the lowest strata of society. It is this constant mantra of being part of the lower strata that makes it virtually impossible for them to escape from such an environment. Out of sheer lack of power, they at times deny the situation and their frustration acquires this hidden character. The point is that those lower in rank do the things that people with a high status refuse to do. It is precisely these unquestioned patterns of behavior that uphold the imbalance.

In order for children to integrate well into a group, they have to acquire the patterns of behavior that are taken for granted within the adult group. Two pedagogical themes are of great importance in Chapter 6 on age groups. First, youngsters need to experience that they are welcome. What is at stake above all is loving relationships within the "family group," however defined. Where else does the child get the feeling it is loved than from the adults on whom it depends? Attachment to the primary carers is extraordinarily important and so is stimulation from the carers' attention. Second, youngsters need to acquire the sense that they are important within the community. This implies that their achievements have to be acknowledged and esteemed. What is crucial here is intelligence and motivation. Ultimately, both are the responsibility of the community. Intelligence as a cognitive capacity depends to a large extent on opportunities to practice the behavior one is good at. One cannot do without a community that stimulates the young to do even better next time, and that provides the opportunities to do so. That is even the case for so-called

“natural talents.” The same is true for motivation. Motivation is embedded in patterns of support that are, or are not, present in the adults’ world. We therefore discuss development and support as important cultural themes. Upbringing is oriented toward incorporation into the group of which one is a member. Wanting to belong is not some abstract desire. It is a physical experience in which the stimulation of affective, as well as cognitive, skills is noticeable.

Chapter 7 examines the concept of us/them and probes into the automatic behaviors that are immediately triggered as soon as we are confronted with strangers. People who originate from other parts of the world most likely have a behavioral style and history that is obscure to us, and they may think, feel, and do things in ways that are totally different to what we are used to ourselves. The relationship in such a conflict, however innocent the conflict may be, is immediately put on edge. Sometimes this results from merely stressing this rather strange “alterity” or “otherness.” In other cases, the emphasis is put precisely on the familiarity of the home group, which burdens the exchange in comparable ways, because the familiar group is immediately used as the standard. However, the distrust with which we might approach a person with an unfamiliar look is generally not the result of a conscious choice. For example, it is not the kind of deliberately activated distrust with which we approach an intruder sneaking around the house. Yet a comparable and immediately present reaction will be felt that somehow has to do with the unfamiliarity of the situation, or with the unfamiliar appearance of the stranger. There is a sudden breach in the usual smooth interactions.

Conversely, familiar patterns in the group may be restrictive with respect to the social mobility and the personal exchanges of its own members. The compliance that the members require from each other functions in such cases as a restrictive demand, which keeps all members in place. A good example is young people in poor districts of a city or in rural areas. They may find it very hard to break away from their familiar social networks. What keeps the youngsters in place and what puts restrictions on their outward mobility is precisely the comfort they experience from giving in to the other members’ demands in terms of expected behaviors. In both cases, then, cultural differences are the result of mutually enforced behavioral patterns expressing themselves in such sayings as: “That’s just not us people” and “If you are born a nickel you will never become a dime.” What lies behind such expressions is the natural thought that one is firmly fixed in communal practices. Those practices are of course most conspicuous when we meet people from totally different ethnic communities, although some people in our own country, perhaps living in remote

rural communities, activate comparable reactions. To simply refer to such a state of affairs as someone's "culture" obscures the fabrication of the particular patterns in actual and real human groups. Our focus in Chapter 7 will be on precisely this fabrication.

Finally, cultural patterns are often associated with the domain of belief and disbelief. If cultural differences are expressed anywhere, it is foremost in the religious domain. And this domain has been in the global spotlight since the beginning of the new millennium. Psychologically speaking, religion is a remarkable phenomenon. In Chapter 8 we will ask ourselves why religion, as the belief in ultimate reality, continues to be so appealing. To that end we will try to come to grips with belief as a generic human capacity. The scientific worldview has eliminated many instances of belief and superstition in all sorts of domains, for example in our dealings with natural disaster, health, and sickness. Yet the transcendental source of belief presents a special case. What kind of special relation occurs when people believe, in this religious sense? We will observe that replacing the transcendental sources with human ones proves very difficult. It seems hard to accept that believing is generically tied to the fact that what happens between people is always a matter of conviction, authenticity, and meaning. Believing in someone, in the sense of really finding someone valuable, cannot be enforced by something other than what happens between that person and oneself. But what happens if the Other, with a capital O, is unknowable and resides in transcendental spheres? In that case, the attuning of behaviors can only be an enterprise that is rooted in the community itself. It is on that premise that in our book religion is brought back to solid human ground.

## **Real People in Real Groups**

Why these five domains, the reader may ask? The answer is practical. All these bipolarities are ingrained in the basic structure of every society. We simply haven't yet succeeded in finding other domains so basic, in the sense that they involve fundamental tasks to be dealt with in every community: Every society is confronted with behavioral patterns that are observed by outsiders to be characteristic of that society and that may challenge their existing mode of being. There always will be youngsters who have to be incorporated (literally) into the adults' world; they need to know and find their place in the group. There will always be the vital task of balancing the relationship between the sexes and providing each sex with its own place in the broader social fabric. Moreover, relationships



are full of poorly understood behavioral patterning. Power struggles, often inherent where there is ill-distributed wealth and prosperity, haunt every society. Humankind has been divided by faith ever since religion came into being. Religion entails persistent behavioral patterns that provide groups of believers with meanings and practices to fight for. Nonbelievers, or people with different religious backgrounds, often do not understand this particular commitment and feel compelled to resist the patterning of behavior derived from practices they do not endorse.

Other basic oppositions like the urban/rural divide, or the division between healthy people and the sick, were suggested to us as well. In rural areas behaviors tend to follow fixed patterns which are the result of behavioral tuning in traditional communities, often far away from the much more vibrant cities. Health is a central domain, too, in which ingrained habitual practices abound. Yet, habitual practices that are learned in the cities or rural areas, respectively, are already implied in the five domains we singled out, since these practices consist of patterned behaviors between men and women, adults and the young, and so on. It illustrates that the five domains are more basic than the urban/rural divide. Likewise, we are inclined to argue that specific patterns and arrangements around ill or disabled people – important though they are – are less central to the functioning of any group than our five basic domains. Perhaps experts can convince us that health does constitute an equally fundamental domain after all; we invite them to do so.

Only rarely in this book will we compare our views on culture and behavioral patterning with other strands of psychological or cross-cultural thinking. Historically, research in the field of culture and behavior has two pivotal points that have structured most of the empirical work. Even now, a quick browse on the Internet will reveal that Geert Hofstede's work still dominates cross-cultural comparisons on behavioral areas that come close to our five domains. He originally distinguished four dimensions on which entire cultures may differ, on the basis of questionnaire data collected at IBM's offices in the 1960s. According to Hofstede (1984), cultures can be feminine or caring, which means that social security is much more elaborate compared to cultures that score highly on the masculine side of the dimension. Cultures can also be dependent on authority or, on the contrary, be more egalitarian; they can stimulate improvisation or instead inhibit this behavior and fixate people in tight social arrangements. And finally, some cultures favor the collective while others allow the individual to be the focal point. Exporting his ideas to China, Hofstede later added the fifth dimension of short-term versus long-term thinking, since it became clear that the eternal Confucian order needed to be



accounted for in the expanding economy of China, in which short-term thinking would be at odds with such an eternal order. And apart from China, there are other nations that think of themselves as firmly fixed to a preordained order.

The five cultural dimensions identified by Hofstede usually operate as a coordinate system on which different cultures are plotted. It is then employed as some sort of user guide for how to deal with alien cultures in business negotiations and cooperation between firms. Businessmen and businesswomen are informed about their partners' cultures in order to avoid inadvertently causing insult. This approach proved to be a huge commercial success. However, from a behavioral science point of view, the popular plotting of cultures and their members is troublesome.

It is one thing to say that people in China, for instance, reveal high scores on the authority, time, and collectivity dimensions compared to some countries in the West. It is a very different matter how these dimensions of behavior came into being on such a large scale. As we have argued, culture itself – as a massive tectonic plate comprising China – cannot be held responsible for the styling of the behavior of individual people. It becomes apparent that Hofstede's model is a multidimensional system of labels. It may have its merits in outlining striking differences in behavioral patterns, to be sure, but it cannot explain the origin of those differences. Yet in much cross-cultural research the labels/dimensions that were derived statistically are subsequently invoked to explain different behavioral patterns across the globe. It should be apparent that although there may be a resemblance between some of our domains and some of Hofstede's dimensions, our approaches are almost diametrically opposed. We do not intend to provide cross-cultural accounts per se, nor is it our intention to merely classify or plot behaviors; our goal is to understand how behavioral patterns come about, time and again, in real interactions between real people. The domains that we discriminate are like fields of interaction that are significant in *every* social group. Although these domains, too, could be perceived as providing some sort of labeling, we explicitly do not invoke them to explain how behaviors get their characteristic shapes.

Another theory that immediately comes to mind if we think about how to deal with culture and behavior is that of John Berry (1997). The main concern of his research program is to provide a model that accounts for different ways of integrating into the society of our choice. Berry began by drawing a two-dimensional matrix, which contains the answers to two questions: (1) Is it considered important to maintain relationships with other groups? (2) Is it considered important to maintain our original

cultural identity and characteristics? This model initiated considerable research into people experiencing acculturative stress. Answering the two questions with “yes” or “no” provides a four-fold, easy-to-apply diagram. We appear to be least prone to stress if *integration* occurs; a state of affairs that is scored when both answers are affirmative. Furthermore, there is a serious risk of being criticized by the members of our own group if the answers are “yes” to maintaining a relationship with the other group but “no” to maintaining our own cultural identity. In this case, *assimilation* is the correct quadrant. Considerable stress is also produced if we separate from society by saying “yes” to maintaining identity and “no” to a valuation of the other group. Now, the classification *separation* applies. And, finally, most stressful is *marginalization*: a “no” to both questions.

Several studies have tried to verify the model. However, they all testify to a preoccupation that we try to avoid: replacing real groups of people and their behaviors by artificially (statistically) constructing a group for research purposes. In Berry’s model the integrators, the assimilators, the separators, and the “marginals” are in fact statistically constructed groups comprised of people with one or several common features. Often in behavioral research, these so-called “aggregate groups” are constructed by the investigators. They cluster people on the basis of being male or female, of having a certain religion or political preference, of providing similar scores in a survey, and so forth. Also, a combination of such variables is regularly used to construct distinct groups in the research. Notwithstanding the fact that such data may be relevant for policymakers and marketers, behavioral scientists should be particularly careful not to confuse aggregate groups with the actual groups in which people operate with their daily routines. In everyday life, for instance, there is no real group that includes all women in Britain, such that it truly has consequences for her everyday experiences. Nor, for that matter, do all the Protestants in a certain country comprise a real group. It is not the common label that makes a group, but the actual relations, roles, “rules,” and so forth between people. Yet, virtually everyone is part of a family, a peer group, or some interest group whose members actually communicate with each other. And, as such, a local, real group of some women or some Protestants may exist. These distinctions are important, yet they tend to become confused when people are labeled as integrators or assimilators on the basis of a few common features. We still need to understand how such people actually cope with the various sources of stress in the actual situations they are involved in, as members of “real” groups.

What makes such a thorough study of culture and the domains in which cultural behavior is omnipresent so necessary today? Culture is a recurrent

theme that every so often arises in the media and in politics, among others. In this era of globalization, we seem to realize that local practices are probably too easily attributed to culture. Persistent differences between people should not be too readily understood as cultural differences. It is always tempting to put “they” in opposition to “we,” and above all we tend to point out that “they” have not yet reached the level on which “we” are. What we do not see is that “we” are in this position because of local patterns of behavior that are apparently favorable for us and that secure us from backwardness and fixation with traditional, outmoded behavioral styles. We mistakenly think that this comfortable position is the result of culture, in this case our own culture. In such a way, we regard successful participation in our society simply as a matter of our *cultural fit*, without asking any further questions about how that fit was achieved in the first place. Research should therefore clarify why what “we” refer to as culture is a hindrance for some people, while it is responsible for a seamless incorporation into social structures and manners for others. Explanations should, then, not merely question how “they” with “their culture” could be disciplined. Explanations should also be able to address what has caused the patterns of behavior in our own society, as a result of which we believe we are privileged or able to set the standard. Such an analysis can only succeed when culture itself is no longer identified as the starting point. After all, “culture” is an abstraction without any motivating force whatsoever, as we have argued above. Scientists should investigate how differences in behavior come about and how those patterns have different effects when “we” encounter “them.” However, scientists should be equally interested in what people have in common. After all, in the end “we” can be just like “them.”

## **In Search of a Psychological Perspective on Culture**

In the next chapter, we present a brief history of early studies of culture. We will see how early European expeditions to exotic shores were colored by the way in which the Westerners perceived their own civilization. Many considered themselves to be superior to indigenous people as a matter of course. Others thought that in principle civilization could be brought to any people. Today, perspectives on culture are still decisive when we meet strangers from around the world. Also, in the twenty-first century, educated people in the West speak of “backward” cultures elsewhere, and of their own “superior” forms of civilization. It is absolutely our intention

to point to the shortsightedness of such representations. It is also our intention to offer a very different perspective on culture than the perspective implied in the traditional and rather mentalistic mantra of culture as the totality of norms and values, customs and manners, and so forth.

Our approach to the relationship between the science of psychology on the one hand and culture as the utmost human accomplishment on the other hand boils down to rejecting the notion of culture as a force, and as a determining or molding factor that explains differences in people's behaviors. Culture is instead the "thing" to be understood. Therefore, in the following chapters we devise a science of the production of behavior in which the social (or, for that manner, "culture") is reclaimed as a truly psychological affair. What should be understood is how the commitment and naturalness in people's behaviors, feelings, and cognitions become organized along the lines of group-characteristic patterns. Our point of departure is psychological: We are interested in the behaviors and the experiences of people. Fundamentally, that is what all vital domains of social intercourse are about. The notion of culture as various forms of artistic expression is legitimate but it is rather different from the notion of culture that is the subject matter of this book. And if social scientists, or others, wish to refer to culture as merely a descriptive term for the highest forms of human achievements, then we make no objection to that either. Yet, whenever the notion of culture is invoked to explain human behavior, our message is emphatic: drop it from the conceptual toolkit. Politicians and journalists should do the same, by the way, as their discourses are replete with examples of misusing "culture" in the ways we addressed above. By the end of Part One, we hope to have laid out in full our psychological perspective on culture.

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# Inventing Culture Theory

In Chapter 1 we pointed out that culture is not a ready-made product with powers of its own that determine people's behavior. Instead, we suggested a search for the patterned behaviors of cultural groups, or groups that are otherwise relevant to the framework of problems at hand. We also emphasized that we should not look for the underpinnings of this patterning *in* the individual, but in the area of what happens *between* people. That is to say, we adopt a forceful interactive perspective. Our focus therefore is on daily practices or routines that people display among themselves, and that involve a degree of styling and design – although this is often hidden by the habitual and self-evident nature of these practices.

Moreover, these routines require the commitment and involvement of those who practice them. There is always something at stake for them. Whether it is in the family, among friends, in religious services, in a sports team, or in a business company; to behave “properly” and effectively always involves people's mutual attunement of behavior. It may often seem intuitive, but what is easily overlooked is that such attunements mobilize people's full skills in order to perform the behaviors that we are most familiar with. Loss of control or ineffective interaction is immediately detected against that background of practiced and taken-for-granted behavioral routines.

This idea of culture as something to be studied and analyzed psychologically, in the context of meaningful human practices, breaks away from the traditional conceptualization of culture in terms of an overarching and operative superstructure. The past two centuries of culture theory have nevertheless had a strong bearing on our current thinking. In this chapter, we aim to show how this is the case. We will also present some additional key ideas that are decisive to our attempt to come to grips with culture as a psychological product. We will not give a detailed historical account, but instead an analysis of the history of the concept itself by presenting inventive moves and interventionist research practices. We start by showing that, from the fifteenth century onward, the first confrontations of the West with other cultural groups – by pilgrims, explorers, adventurers, merchants, and early colonists – were directly accompanied by attempts not only to understand the behavior of the indigenous peoples, but also to control it and to bring it in line with the dominant patterns in the Western world. We follow the path from the study of the minds of the “natives” or “savages,” as they were called (either in a derogatory way or with a degree of admiration), up to our dealings with the multiethnic societies of today. Our analysis is by no means complete or exhaustive. We present some highlights that were helpful to our own approach.

## **Early Cultural Confrontations**

As we might expect, the first explorers and the later rulers of the newly explored lands customarily observed what was not really there. This often happens when something surprising and completely new is encountered. Objective perception became difficult because the newcomers took with them their Western sentiments, ideas, and practices, which led them to prejudice much of what they encountered abroad. As such, they framed their perceptions in already existing social schemes and projected onto the newly discovered worlds their own fantasy-ridden expectations. The absence of cities, or clothes, or other signs of what the colonizers thought of as indispensable utensils and practices in a civilized society, inspired and justified an initial harsh, negative, and rejecting attitude. In such cases, the folks on the faraway shores didn't really look like human beings. Historians of civilization have documented this first reaction to “primitive” people in great detail. We know, for example, that Charles Darwin and Captain Robert Fitzroy had great difficulty in recognizing as

human beings the people they met in the harsh environment of Tierra del Fuego. They must have thought that if any pliable human nature were present, then taking some of these people back to Britain and civilizing them would prove the presence of at least something human. Moreover, this “education” might salvage them from their beastly existence. The now civilized indigenous people could then embark on a return mission, to educate their friends and families who had remained at home.

Robert Fitzroy, on whose ship Charles Darwin embarked, did in fact carry out this attempt to prove the natives’ human nature: He took some of the inhabitants from Tierra del Fuego back to Britain. But once they returned to their native environment, dressed in English clothes and educated with English manners, the subsequent mission failed because the “students” quickly relapsed into their customary way of life. The behavior of these explorers, who were highly educated, certainly by the standards of that time, demonstrates how difficult it was for them to meet the natives with an unprejudiced eye.

Numerous books now tell us that the Western civilizing offensive was just that: an *offensive*, akin to military action. This attitude survived the early years of the great explorations and also of the very first settlements that followed. Obnoxious behavior toward the natives persisted during colonial times, until well into the twentieth century. Apart from a few sexual adventurers, few colonists were prepared to regard the natives’ behavior positively and in its own right; it was just too different from their own.<sup>1</sup> The rapid, unreflective judgment that no degree of civilization whatsoever was involved justified the use of violence and strong coercion, in order to enforce on the indigenous people the familiar behavioral patterns of the colonists’ home country. In terms of labor and morals, for instance, absolute compliance was demanded. And to prevent the behavioral styles of the “wild” polluting those of the newcomers, the latter made sure that there would be no mixing of the races.<sup>2</sup>

Interracial marriage was discouraged, although a comparison of the histories of Asia and Latin America, for example, reveals that the conquerors from the northern, Protestant regions of Europe apparently were more successful than their Catholic rivals from Spain and Portugal in this mission to keep the races apart: Compared to the former Dutch and British colonies, Brazil is significantly more mixed race. Yet apartheid was endemic everywhere.

Of course, in some cases, it was immediately noticed that the colored people were very skillful and subtle in a number of social domains. Their alien manners also occasionally drew some positive attention. For example,



they appeared to be less bound by the religiously inspired work ethic that seemed to have the entire Western world in its grip. They were quite relaxed. They looked as if they enjoyed every new day, for instance picking enough fruit from the trees to meet their own daily needs. To the majority of Western onlookers, this relaxed work ethic, neglecting any harvesting for later trade, would of course quickly betray a short-term perspective and imply a lazy attitude. The natives seemed to enjoy warm, cozy, and intimate social relations. They also appeared prepared to have lustful intercourse much more often because they were not poisoned by a Western dualism or by Puritan religious ideas about sex. To some observers, they lived healthy lives and reached relatively old age in comfort. And once they had sexual intercourse with Christians, the natives were “driven on by excessive lasciviousness and threw all decency to the winds. They live to the age of one hundred and fifty, are rarely ill, and if they do run into bad health, they cure themselves with roots.” That is how Amerigo Vespucci – after whom the Americas were named – describes them in *Mundus Novus* (1503). He also tells us that the women in the newly discovered land were very seductive and beautiful, without hanging breasts, not even after having given birth to many children. The sailors lusted after them. This also demonstrates that a double moral standard was maintained toward these women: Even though their behaviors were almost unanimously considered to be wild and primitive, they nevertheless were chosen as special company. Vespucci, and many explorers with him, assessed right away the childlike character of the indigenous people and their receptive attitudes towards nature’s blessings. This resulted in the icon of the *noble savage*, which has remained in the Western world ever since.

In hindsight it is clear that this iconic picture was not based on a proper understanding of the natives’ way of life. It was partly created at gunpoint, so to speak, because the inhabitants of those lands were immediately confronted with military preponderance, which eventually sparked an enforced welcome by the female populace (encouraged by calculating males, no doubt) out of sheer fear.<sup>3</sup> Tahiti, for example, was first overrun by Samuel Wallis and his gunmen in 1767. To appease these ferocious men, the Tahitians gave them what they expected. The women gave them a sexually gratifying, warm welcome. This made it seem as if the women were uninhibited, in the same way that Amerigo Vespucci had apparently found them in South America. But it cannot be denied that after the first slaughtering of thousands of the natives, the remaining ones must have thought it wise to let these violent newcomers play around with the women in order to appease them.

Four years later, when Louis Antoine de Bougainville also received this initially enforced but now seemingly spontaneous warm and lustful welcome, he interpreted it as a free gift from paradise. Little wonder, then, that it led philosophers like Rousseau to create the romantic image of people untouched by corrupting civilizing efforts. In this way, some sort of “sexutopia” was created that later inspired many writers and painters, such as Gauguin. He finally made the myth endemic in the Western mind by painting the natives as the androgynous inhabitants of paradise. A better example could hardly be given of how the Western experience of an exotic world was framed for many centuries.

*Mundus Novus* was an early expression of the mission that the Western world thought it had to carry out, because of the head start in life that the Christian faith was deemed to provide. In this letter, as in many other texts, it was argued that the natives’ behavior required the stern hand of a ruler. Colonial rule was inspired by Christian ideals. Following the Bible, church leaders understood the “savages” to be the cursed descendants of Cham, the son of Noah who was the forebear of the colored peoples. Conversion was the rule. Yet, its lack of success, or at least the reluctance that was encountered nearly everywhere, contributed to the interpretation of the nature and behavior of the people as being inferior. In most cases, they were thought of as lazy, stupid, and corrupt. This depended on the civilization encountered, of course. There are accounts of Jesuit priests meeting Chinese literati, among whom the concept of Original Sin was believed to be the strangest gift a god could give to humans. In the eyes of the Chinese scholars, such a god could only be extremely harmful to people. How could such a god be worshipped? In the eyes of the Chinese, these men of the West must have seemed completely crazy. It was a serious dispute, eliciting sparks of admiration and respect on both sides.

## Later Developments

From the second half of the seventeenth century onward, international trade grew enormously. Colonial powers such as Great Britain and the Netherlands expanded their overseas territories. The exploitation of colonial resources resulted in an unprecedented prosperity in the homelands. In due course, conquering the world for the rather mundane purpose of making profit began to supplement – to put it mildly – the Christian ideal of saving the souls of the natives. It is perhaps better to say that the Christian ideal was gradually overruled by imperialism. The changing

stakes of commercial capitalism demanded expanding exploitation of both natural and human resources. The colonial “subjects” could make some gains as well, if they were prepared to do the harsh and unpleasant work. In most cases, of course, they were brutally forced to do that kind of work.

The compliance of the local inhabitants thus became an economic asset. Harsh forms of social management were imposed in order to turn their behavior into productive activity. The effects of this kind of discipline were diverse across the globe. In some colonies the inhabitants more or less accepted behavior regulation. But in many other faraway lands locals opposed Western control. In general, the colonizers came to realize that the natives were not at all easy to manage. After all, their image of the indigenous population was in the end an utterly negative one. It generated a host of derogatory descriptions of overseas peoples ranging from emphasizing their “bestly” cruelty in some situations to the degenerate nature of the savage races as a whole. These images became part of the most oppressive practice ever: slavery. The trade lasted until well into the nineteenth century and left an everlasting mark in the minds of the native peoples. Other cruelties occurred as well. Nearly all the local inhabitants of Tasmania were killed in a raid on October 7, 1830. The white settlers hunted them down in a manner that resembled the hunting of animals, as Robert Hughes describes vividly in *The Fatal Shore* (1986).

From the late nineteenth century onward, the perspective on local inhabitants changed, and so did relations between usurpers and subjects. At home, the moral compass moved in the direction of a more secular and scientific account of human nature. The maintenance of a dominant colonial position now required a more secular legitimation, rather than one founded on Christian principles alone. For it was quite evident that a rival secular movement was on its way, equally acclaimed to do good to the people, albeit not in terms of faith in God but rather in civilization, or culture. This resulted in a thorough restyling of the image of “the other,” as part of a civilizing offensive that unfolded from the early 1800s onward.

The imperial powers embraced the concept of civilization along with a gradual shift toward a more scientific outlook on the prime mission of the Western world, namely the conversion to a Western way of life instead of religious conversion. The focus moved toward assessing the nature of the indigenous people in terms of fit or unfit capacities, and away from assessing that nature in terms of sinfulness and religious shortcomings. The link to supremacy continued to be easily made, however, because that

road had already been prepared by the prejudice of Christian faith being mandatory for a good life. Most Western colonizers worked from the premise that history thus far had given the white, Christian world the obligation to bring the large remaining parts of the globe under their guidance. The earlier paradigm of Christian salvation was supplemented with efforts to impose on the savages the reign of “culture” – that is to say, the Western variant. Preoccupation with culture and culture theory was born, foremost in science, but also among the general public.

The first, and for a long time dominant version of this reign by culture, as elaborated by Edward Burnett Tylor (1903), immediately created a so-called “evolutionary” perspective on culture. It held that in the end all peoples of the world would “evolve” to the same level of cultural complexity and sophistication that the Western people had already reached. This idea of evolution still lacked a Darwinian sense and more or less resembled a developmental perspective. Yet, not a single scientist worked out how the Western world had reached this self-ascribed summit. What happened instead was a cultural comparison, leading to the inevitable conclusion that this “evolution” had resulted in a hierarchical order of cultural achievements, with African cultures at the bottom and Western civilization at the top. Such a civilizing emphasis on culture stimulated a further interest in the “psychological” nature of the local inhabitants in order to assess to what degree they were susceptible to, and fit for, the blessings of Western cultural achievements.

## **National Accents**

The actual civilizing work that began with the Tylorian notion of culture was quite diverse. Also, the civilizing offensive of the West was far from monolithic. We will limit our analysis to three nations that played a crucial formative role in culture theory, by deploying their national articulation of the civilizing mission in various countries overseas: France, Great Britain, and Germany. For the largest colonial powers, France and Britain, “civilization” was much more a way of life than a concept or idea, because there were important stakes involved. The control of their colonial subjects had to be anchored in a Western lifestyle with a core moral focus – “reason” and rational life for the French, and “work ethic” or hard and diligent work for the British. Both these values dominated the cultural patterns in the homelands. The small colonial power of Germany provided an interesting counterforce, as we will see.

## The French

The French developed the tradition of the moderate Enlightenment. In this brand of Enlightenment human development was understood as the steady unfolding of reason amid a still relatively unshattered world in which faith and religion were a more or less private, albeit indispensable, affair. In French eyes savagery was an errant force that thwarted the unfolding of reason. Its slackening influence must be corrected with the help of solid, scientific research. To that end the French manned several expeditions, with scholars of all sorts, especially from the medical profession, carrying instruments for measuring the natives' muscular strength, attitudes, cognitive capacities, strivings, ideas, feelings, and rational powers. They went to distant shores in the wake of the explorers who had already done some preparation work. One early French mission is particularly revealing. On February 22, 1802, on the island of Marie, near Tasmania, an expedition of five explorers ran into 14 armed Aborigines. Among the explorers were two members of the *Société des Observateurs de l'Homme* (Society for the Observation of Man), Nicolas-Martin Petit and François Péron. The men on both sides managed to indicate to each other their friendly intentions. Then, the Aborigines became excited about the white strangers and wanted to see what these men were like, preferably under their clothing. After some deliberation their curiosity was satisfied. Michael, the cabin boy, agreed to undress. The ship's log, which was discovered in 1890, contained an official statement telling that the naked boy:

suddenly displayed such a striking proof of his virility that all of [the natives] exclaimed loudly in surprise . . . Such a state of force and vigor . . . surprised them greatly, and they gave the impression of applauding that state, like people for whom it is out of the ordinary. Several showed with a kind of contempt their own soft and flabby organs, they brandished themselves with an expression of regret and desire that seemed to indicate that they did not experience it as often as us.

Confronted with the locals' surprise about their own comparatively low degree of virility, Péron speculated that their sexual desire might be periodic, which could be seen as an indication of their intimate link with the animal kingdom. According to Péron, it suggested that it would be more accurate to focus on the animalistic nature of the primitives. This particular view on, and later hunt for, Aborigines had in a sense already been justified in advance with the help of medical doctors who had declared that these indigenous people did not belong fully to the human race. Unfortunately, science works that way when scholars are part and parcel

of a civilizing mission and are insufficiently prepared to operate as impartially as possible.

At the time of the expedition, the image of the “people of the woods,” or “savages,” was also partly formed by the idea of the “Bon Sauvage,” as we saw earlier. Not yet corrupted by civilization, indigenous people were supposed to live a free and happy life, with a strong and vigorous constitution. Péron, however, did not seem entirely convinced that the savages were that strong. For him it still was a hypothesis that required research. Measuring people’s muscular strength by means of the *dynamometer*, he compared the inhabitants with Western individuals and concluded that in fact they were weaker. The corollary was that this lesser muscular force was somehow a sign of restricted rational capacities and weaker minds. Even though the natives used language, carried weapons, and showed all signs of human comportment, in Péron’s eyes they demonstrated such a childish mental capacity that he deemed their mentality as incomplete, or (in French) “*primitive*.” The notion of “*mentalité primitive*,” or primitive mentality, was invented and from then on it became a dominant legacy in the early French contributions to culture theory.

Lucien Lévy-Bruhl was the first scholar to elaborate on this idea, with great consequences for the idea of Western superiority. He gave this notion of primitive mentality some currency by stating in his book *La mentalité primitive* (1922) that native people were neither irrational nor lacked logic (see also Lévy-Bruhl 1946). Rather, they just were pre-logical – that is to say, much more holistic and dependent upon nature in their thinking. They were more bound to the group, and much more susceptible to the wonders of nature and the supernatural world. “Pre-logical” became a technical term, which emphasized people’s dependence on tribal beliefs in the connectedness or wholeness of things. It also became an honorary nickname for a faculty that contemporary Western individuals had lost.

In this respect we have to credit Lévy-Bruhl for his insistence on this special faculty of non-Western men and women, by means of which these people found their place even as exemplifiers of a special sense for religious wonders. Yet, he also contributed to the persistent myth of a native mind lacking full-blown intellectual capacities. It influenced research into their mental faculties well into the twentieth century. To cut a long development short, using Piagetian ideas and experiments about the limitations of the minds of children in applying proper logic, natives in Africa and Australia were exposed to all kinds of manipulations in order to prove their inability to reason. Well into the second half of the twentieth century, so-called “conservation experiments” were conducted that allegedly proved the natives’ mental backwardness.

Let us first describe the general procedure, since all conservation experiments are variations on the same theme. Conservation means preserving something in the face of change. To come up with the correct answer in a conservation experiment, in which, for instance, water is poured from a long and thin glass into a low and broad glass, a child must preserve an awareness of quantity, mass, number, area, or some other abstract characteristic of reality. However, we should be aware of a central flaw: Western schoolchildren around the age of 5–7 begin to recognize that quantities are preserved in such experiments, and in doing so make a transition to a new stage of cognitive development, because they are used to glass containers. The same is not true for most “primitive” peoples. Applying the same experiments to people in some parts of Africa, who had had hardly any formal training and no experience of glass and other containers that are common in the daily lives of Westerners, the natives generally performed very poorly. The conclusion was drawn that these people suffered from mental restrictions compared to some children in the West. Up until the second half of the last century it was assumed that Aboriginal children, for example, lagged behind – and Aboriginal adults as well.

It will come as no surprise that as soon as experimenters allowed for other forms of conservation – for example, materials and quantities that local people were accustomed to working with – the Piagetian ideas proved seriously flawed. Michael Cole and Sylvia Scribner (1974) shattered the whole idea by demonstrating that native children who were trained in conserving forms in clay did *not* show the other children’s biases at all. Nowadays it is generally assumed that with proper instruction any very young child will learn quite quickly that the volumes are conserved. Moreover, non-Western people who are not used to the ciphered world in which Westerners grow up cannot be judged by standards that are derived from numerical practices that are normal in the West. Measuring by such a standard would be grossly unfair and would certainly lead to the underestimation, or the complete misjudgment, of the cognitive capacities of native peoples.

What can be learned from the French approach is that it is above all *local practice* and its skillful implementation that matter. Inborn capacities do not vary significantly; stimulation and motivation within the local group make the difference. It took at least 150 years, from the first French expedition of Petit and Péron, before existing local practices became the focus of psychological research; that is, to put it bluntly, also a century and a half of postponed exploration into the degree of civilization of the natives and their real cognitive capacities. Reason and rationality are no



longer Western prerogatives; they need to be wrought from practices everywhere.

### The British

The British understood human nature not so much as a rational, independent source of progress, but as a motivating force that contributed to civilizing progress once the appropriate economic and political measures had been taken. The work ethic of the conquered people did not resemble at all what the British rulers were used to at home. Their own working class, which comprised by far the largest part of the population, had always been an obedient asset within the confines of a strict authority. The lords were accustomed to a working class that knew its place. In the colonies, expectations about the local workers were the same. And, just like the French, the British were convinced that “savagery” had to be corrected. A universal, civilized human spirit could supposedly be gained from hard work and free trade. The utilitarian principle that comfort and self-interest would in the long run bring everyone under its spell was the basis for imposing a hierarchical economic order and other institutional provisions on the native inhabitants. It generally resulted in a severe and degrading regime in the British colonies to ensure that the proper conditions for civilization were met.

Over the course of the nineteenth century, the arguments for white, or Western, superiority started to be drawn increasingly from biology and not, as was previously the case, from religious or rather unspecific scientific sources. This “biologization” of cultural differences came, to a great extent, from the way in which Darwin’s theory of evolution was received. Darwin shared the common notions of his era with respect to the “savages.” He observed, for example, that an Aboriginal woman uses very few abstract words, cannot count above four, and therefore cannot exert her self-consciousness or reflect on the nature of her own existence. Evidently Darwin did not think highly of Aboriginal women, because he translated his observations into doubts about their ability to reflect. In general, he adopted a relatively cautious position with respect to racial ranking: He did not argue explicitly along racial lines, but at the same time he shunned the influence of modifying practices; he was probably too much of a biologist for that.

Darwin’s followers were far more explicit and radical than Darwin himself. Many intellectuals used evolutionary thinking to draw a sharp distinction between the uncivilized races abroad and the inhabitants of the Western homelands. During the nineteenth century, when contact with



natives around the globe increased enormously, several Western intellectuals and scientists became convinced that Darwinism was not merely a theory, methodology, and research orientation, but was foremost a specific model for the development of the human species, and based on inequality. Culture theory developed in that context. Selective mechanisms such as “natural selection” and the “struggle for life” were held responsible for the existence of superior and inferior races or cultures across the globe. It implied a harsh verdict on “primitive” people: They were backward as a result of their low position on the evolutionary ladder.

The social implications of evolutionary thought became particularly apparent in the work of Herbert Spencer (1864). In his “Social Darwinist” doctrine he coined the phrase “survival of the fittest,” and directly translated it into judgments of racial superiority and inferiority. According to Spencer, the primitive’s brain could not deal with complexities and was therefore unfit for civilization. Thus, the French explorers appeared not to be alone in this regard. This did not mean, however, that primitive minds were inferior in all respects. Their visual acuity and a number of other, “lower,” psychological functions were considered superior, but rather as a result of their animalistic nature. Spencer’s idea of primitive superiority in natural functions would be echoed in later psychological research on native inhabitants of the colonies. Almost all the research into the mental capacities of “the other” started from the framework of a racial hierarchy.

In line with the best empirical tradition of Britain, it was primarily biological arguments that underscored the idea of Western racial superiority. White anatomy and physiology were set as the standard against which appearances and behavioral styles of other races were measured. Books about anatomy, the descent of man, and biological development were illustrated with plates, showing the “Negro” occupying a place in between the anthropoid apes and the Caucasians. The racist understanding of race, with its emphasis on biologically determined inferiority, enabled the ranking of peoples around the globe on an evolutionary ladder of biological tailoring. The notion of culture was subsequently “biologized,” as denoting nothing but the visible part of people’s racial nature. Within this racist frame, temperament, intellectual, physical, and moral features were assessed and often employed to back up the harsh regime to which the native inhabitants were subjected.

British psychologists’ empirical leaning was decisively shaped when they joined the Cambridge Anthropological Expedition to Torres Strait in 1898. William Rivers and some of his students sailed overseas to investigate the primary psychological functions of the “primitives,” in order

to be able to compare them with the functions of “civilized” Europeans. They established a kind of field laboratory where they experimentally investigated psychophysical phenomena, such as visual and auditory acuity, reaction time, and discrimination between weights. The researchers reported that the primitives outperformed the Western civilians in most of the perceptual tasks. Yet, although the colonial subjects were excellent perceivers, their capacity for sound reasoning was definitely underdeveloped. These observations were commonly understood as a corroboration of white superiority: No one could beat the civilized, white Europeans’ capacity for reasoning. The British and the French conclusions were in agreement.

Francis Galton was a key figure in translating white superiority and hereditary ideas into practical interventions to protect the quality of what was considered superior “stock” (1884). He took great pains in showing that it was possible to quantify racial differences in psychological terms by using observers’ scores on *n*-point judgment scales (e.g., running from “highly valuable” to “most unworthy”), instead of making judgments of worth that were based merely on personal sentiments. A trip to Syria, Egypt, and Namibia had already activated in him the standard sentiments of his time and his class, which for Galton precluded any interest in the lifestyle of the people he visited. He was so abhorred by the men and women he encountered that he became firmly convinced of the excellence of the English stock. Consequently he tried to argue as objectively as possible that certain features of the natives were a barrier to social evolution. He took the natives to be impulsive and lazy; their work ethic fell short. They also lacked foresight, Galton surmised, although they were capable of sudden hard work when they craved food. In this context, he tried to persuade his audience not to mix races, but to breed in the purest possible lineage.

Galton coined the terms *nature* and *nurture* to stipulate the effects of heredity on the one hand and environment – that is to say, education – on the other. Questions about the relative contribution of natural endowment and environmental stimulation soon resulted in a controversy that lasted for most of the twentieth century. Galton’s conviction that nature was the key determining factor was broadly shared by European intellectuals, and fitted in well with the Western civilizing offensive. Early on, however, the French-Swiss botanist Alphonse de Candolle presented a rival hypothesis (1873), stating that on the basis of available statistical data various environmental variables influenced the rates at which different European countries brought forth important scientists. In *Inquiries into Human Faculty and Its Development* (1883) Galton accepted Candolle’s

alternative but he rescued his “nativism” by arguing that only individuals endowed with an innate taste for science would profit from environmental variables. Thus, Galton’s work set the tone for a debate in which advocates of both “nature” and “nurture” perspectives tended to defend their own position, rather than attempt to develop more refined conceptions of the ways in which nature and nurture might interact, like most researchers do today. Neither the nativists nor the environmentalists came to realize that the deployment of innate capacities in a given environment involved a *third* party. As we will demonstrate in much greater detail in Chapter 6, the establishment of an optimal fit between capacities and environmental provisions has to take into account the group-bound ways of managing both environmental and personal resources.

In Great Britain in the 1920s, issues of race and eugenics were on the agenda of many psychologists. Karl Pearson, who was Galton’s partner in establishing the field of psychometrics, founded the *Annals of Eugenics* in 1925, featuring a lengthy article about the characteristics of immigrant children. This concluded from a large survey that Jewish children in particular were inferior to British children in many ways, ranging from intelligence to personal hygiene. Another important figure on the British scene was personality psychologist R.B. Cattell. He published his ideas about Nordic supremacy and anti-Semitism in the 1930s, and translated his views into enthusiasm for segregation and the population policies that were developed in Nazi Germany.

The culmination of superiority thinking in the horrendous practices and beliefs of the Nazis is always taken as an example of where racist arguments can lead. Other consequences are much less disputed and appear innocent at first sight. For example, people who live in high social circles tend to see themselves as a separate “race,” in the sense of a special breed. In relation to this judgment, they tend to forget what turned them into this special kind – that is to say, what were the circumstances that contributed to their exceptional position. They tend to talk about this in terms of being gifted with special qualities. Arguing along racial lines generally involves this inadequate perception. It keeps the lower ranks in place as well. It is in this context that the British share of the development of culture theory shows a remarkable preoccupation with labor and achievement motivation. A key development in this regard is the work of Alex Inkeles, who introduced the notion of “Industrial Man” (1960) as a specification of the modal personality of the Western world. It still lives on in ideas about *Homo Urbanus*, the city dweller, as the most recent and most widespread form of modal personality. Work on the need for achieve-

ment has also frequently been used as a source of measurement instruments to assess the progress of modernization in Third World countries.

In the United States, modal personality research was an offshoot of research that was initiated by Franz Boas, which we discuss in the next section on the Germans. It scrutinized the basic cultural orientations of American groups that remained somehow in a backward position, such as African Americans, Native Americans, and Latinos. The important point for our discussion is that this kind of research sensitized psychologists to a benign form of cultural relativism, which brought an end to the more or less monolithic view of culture. Consequently, from then on, many researchers understood “culture” as an important psychological variable.

Research in that vein sparked off the statistical approach of modal personality research which in turn firmly established the “trust in numbers,” as Theodore Porter (1995) aptly phrased it in his critical book on the use and misuse of statistical measurement as a basis for cross-cultural comparison. It is an interesting sequel to Stephen Jay Gould’s book *The Mismeasure of Man* (1981), in which French craniometry was criticized. Important in Porter’s book is Galton’s contribution to biometrics, the statistical measurement of mental capacity, and other psychological traits that are purported to relate to people’s susceptibility to modernization and change.

Hofstede’s work, which we encountered in Chapter 1, is a good example of how behavioral scientists in the British tradition of Inkeles and Levinson came to think about the nature–culture opposition. The first step is to elevate the level of analysis from individuals to entire nations. Structural and cultural features of nations are “psychologized” by means of large surveys about aggregated psychological attributes of individuals and groups. The economic qualities of countries, particularly those in the Third World, become enmeshed in the statistical jargon about traits and states of their inhabitants. This kind of psychologization turns culture into something to be used as a variable, in extensive correlational designs. Culture thus becomes a factor that is manipulated in large-scale comparative investigations of the economic feasibility of countries all over the world. Moreover, this factor is set in opposition to individuals. In consequence, culture is turned into an external force coercing people into actions and ideas, much in the way that classic sociologists had thought.

To conclude, Anglo-Saxon research tended, certainly in the past, to draw population characteristics from surveys that focused primarily on large samples. This created the problem of how to deal with real individuals in

real groups that constituted the statistical features of a nation. The important legacy of culture as a predominantly local practice was lost.

### The Germans

Notwithstanding the hegemony of racist ideas in the nineteenth century, there were intellectuals who doubted the hereditary inferiority of native people. Some German scholars, brought up in the Jewish tradition of being highly cultured and literate, launched a counterforce against the biological claim of fixed mental characteristics of races. Especially relevant to culture theory is the coining of the term *Völkerpsychologie* by two of them, Moritz Lazarus and Hermann Steinthal, in 1851. It referred to the systematic, scientific study of the historical origins of people's way of life. This *Völkerpsychologie* developed the romantic idea of *Volksgeist*, or folk spirit – which got its first psychological formulation by Johann Friedrich Herbart (1816) – into a full-blown counterforce against biologicistic views. Biological forces are not decisive. Conclusive is the way in which meaning is produced in well-defined units of people, to which the notion of “*Volk*” refers. Herbart was the first to point out that the content of human mental equipment comes from “folk ways,” the ways in which people commonly behave.

To situate Herbart it is necessary to see the historical connections between the program of the *Völkerpsychologen* and that of the expressivist tradition in Western Enlightenment thinking that can be traced at least to Spinoza (1677). It was Spinoza who started to treat emotion and feeling (the passions) as vital to the expressive communal competences of humans, instead of viewing them as the mere result of machine-like proceedings in their viscera. While advancing the central tenets of a secular, deterministic, and hence fully scientific worldview, this Spinozist train of thought has also provided an alternative to the tendency to always put biology first, which featured so predominantly in the British tradition. Johann Gottfried Herder is particularly relevant in this context. It proved hard for Enlightenment thinkers to break away from a religiously inspired providential understanding of history. Herder (1784–1791) attempted to reconcile an empirical, science-based understanding of history (and the cultural differences that come with it) with the “powers of the soul” – the latter being a general cognitive understanding of what Herder held to be the utmost human meaning-giving capacity. Both Herder and Herbart stand at the beginning of an understanding of language and mind in which the spirit of a people, or of a nation, is conceived of as a device that

provides individual minds with content. To that end, Herbart postulated mental forces that operate both at the individual and at the social level.

In the practical translation of these abstract ideas Herbart embraced the German emphasis on education and the higher human faculties (or *Kultur*). Through training or education individual minds became attuned to each another because the content of the educative effort made exchanges between people possible, even characteristic for this or that group, and thus contributed to the *Volksgeist* of a people. Herbart stressed the necessity of studying what he called “the dawn of mental life in natives and savages” because it would contribute to understanding what forces determined the *Geist*, or spirit, of a people. No wonder that philology became an integral part of the emerging *Völkerpsychologie*. This was underlined by the name of the journal Lazarus and Steinthal founded in 1860: *Zeitschrift für Völkerpsychologie und Sprachwissenschaft* [Journal of *Völkerpsychologie* and linguistics]. Philologists studied the development of language communities.<sup>4</sup>

Despite this explicit renunciation of racist ideas – or, to rephrase it positively, despite this central concern with the universal pliability of the human mind through language and education – German scholars displayed an ambivalent attitude toward people of non-Western origin. Even though one would suspect a straightforward acceptance of all language and culture because of the linguists’ discovery of an *Ursprache* (a proto-language) and its transformation into the variety of languages, it was without doubt that only the more eligible races had a language and therefore a culture of high standing. Other races, in particular the colored ones, were put in their shade. This ranking of peoples is still the most conspicuous feature of culture theory along German lines. It permeated the general thinking, however, and even today heated discussions abound in which allusions are made to some cultures and religions being “backward” and unfit for the promotion of modern life.

Even after the discovery in the 1890s of the Benin bronzes (beautifully crafted bronze statuettes of warriors, local chiefs, court scenes, and other aspects of the lifestyles in this West African kingdom), which pointed to the elaborate intellectual and creative capacities of the native peoples, the ambivalence remained. Despite the fact that their capacity for language put them on a par with Westerners, such a judgment did not preclude that colored people were placed in a backward position. They needed further education. The study of their folk ways was put forward as a means to a better psychological understanding of how this education could be implemented. On the one hand, the proponents of more respect for the so-called “primitives” were clearly at odds with racist and racialist

thinkers because of the latter's biological determinism. On the other hand, there was much less disagreement about the issue of ranking peoples.

In the end, the notion of *Volk* was used in a similar way that others used the notion of race. *Volk* was understood as a kind of fixed, and more or less discrete, entity, which possessed a *Volksgeist*. *Volksgeister*, however, came in various sorts. On the basis of the stage the *Volksgeist* was in, cultural groups as well as entire nations could be ranked in the larger historic-evolutionary framework of civilizations. Western civilization, of course, was positioned at the top. Toward the lower end were the peoples whose *Volksgeist* was too backward, historically, to be able to improve their living conditions on their own. So, also from the perspective of the German thinkers, there was much civilizing work to do. The natives still had to climb a long way up the evolutionary ladder to obtain full humanity. In this respect the emphasis on culture and history did not turn out to be a viable alternative that could effectively establish a counterforce against biological racism. The cultures and histories of the so-called "primitive" people were as much a source of debasing and degrading remarks as race was.

It is hardly surprising that, in the midst of so much ambivalence, not all nineteenth-century culture thinkers embraced Western superiority. German scholars, such as Robert Virchow (1877) and Theodor Waitz (1849), argued against turning savages into a cognitively impaired species. They claimed that the use of language exemplified that every group had a general *capacity* for progress, no matter how primitive their current way of life. If the conditions were right, each culture would evolve to a higher level, which would eventually reveal equality between peoples. Thus a little room was created for an unprejudiced view of other peoples' cultural richness.

The German anthropologist Franz Boas elaborated on this premise. His work initiated a US-bound research tradition, which was relatively free from racism and entailed a more positive outlook on the lifestyles of "primitive" people. Boas was trained by Virchow and also by Adolf Bastian, who inspired him to supplement the emphasis on natural circumstances with an emphasis on history and culture. Initially, Boas had been convinced that Galtonian biometrics would lead to a "definite" solution to the problem of heredity versus environment. Later, when he had moved to New York, he became one of the most articulate critics of nativist approaches. The evidence for racial "types," which had been obtained through anthropometrics and statistical analysis, proved to be rather inconclusive. Boas showed as early as 1901 that the bulk of the two clusters of races (African, Australian, and Pacific versus Asian, American, and



European) have similar brains with similar cognitive capacities. In studying the form of the head, literally, Boas serendipitously found that immigrant children who had better food and hygiene during their stay in the United States developed head-forms that were more fully grown than those of children living in bad conditions. This unexpected result led him to abandon anthropometry altogether, and to focus instead on the interplay between environmental arrangements and natural endowment. In this line of work, Boas became one of the most devastating critics of white supremacist race theories.

Boas (1940) introduced an anthropological notion of culture that took issue with the prevailing Tylorian one. He substituted Tylor's monolithic hierarchy with a flexible order in which the *plurality of culture* was emphasized. This open position stimulated a dynamic view of culture as a composite, built from people's elementary thoughts and folkloristic components. No longer was culture a singular and fixed evolutionary end-stage, as was held to be present in an almost ideal form in Western societies. From then on, culture was something that every *Volk* possessed, albeit in more or less actualized forms. This idea at least allowed for plurality *and* for improvement by education. Cultural differences could thus readily replace racial differences. Boas' core idea was that interaction with skillful practicing adults and confrontation with societal structures, ranging from subsistence systems to institutionalized religious practices, would have far-reaching consequences for the individual's personal life.

Otto Klineberg was convinced that "deep down culture could go into the little movements of the hands" (quoted in Kevles 1986: 136). He studied the bodily expressiveness (especially dance) and the caring practices of mothers in black American cultures. In their caring skills, Klineberg found ample proof of their cultured natures. Another focus was put on socializing practices that turned youngsters into competent males and females, making them fit for marriage and parenthood in line with the customary practices in the local group. On a global and more speculative level, Boas' followers attempted to describe whole cultures in terms of basic personality structures or traits that were derived from predominantly basic motives. Ruth Benedict (1934) pioneered this project when she wrote about the Pueblo Indians, the Dobu, and the Kwakiutl. She characterized the respective cultures using Friedrich Nietzsche's two ways of dealing with the creative process: Dionysian and Apollonian. For example, she labeled the conspicuous consumption that occurred in the Pueblo *potlatch* as Dionysian, and contrasted it with customs of Apollonian restrictiveness among the Kwakiutl. Benedict's work stimulated further



interest in culture-and-personality. Many anthropologists followed her suggestion of linking institutional arrangements to basic personality features.

Thus, personality became culture writ small, and culture became personality writ large. A side effect was that many psychologists, as well as social scientists, came to believe that habitual forms of behavior “crept into the hands and bodies” of those who proved difficult to adjust to the dominant way of life. This line of reasoning replaced merely biological explanations for the “backwardness” of minority groups. Psychology was needed to facilitate the integration or the “melting pot” of races and nationalities. Research refocused on prejudice in the dominant groups, and on culturally induced tenaciousness with respect to already established dominant practices on the part of immigrants or other minorities. In this way the initial German line found a follow-up in the United States. In Germany, by contrast, racist ideas intensified in the 1930s. The initial idea that culture was the main outcome of linguistic forms was replaced by perspectives on biology that in the end fanned the fire of racist typologies, which facilitated exclusion and extermination. We need not repeat that sad history here.

### Culture science and biology in deadlock

Despite more than two centuries of experience with the mental makeup and heritage of diverse peoples, the culture theories that resulted from various strands of thought did not help much in giving other people – with a different lifestyle and outlook on life – their deserved worth. Western scholars failed to put their own civilizing achievements into proper perspective. That is, they refused to put them under scientific scrutiny in the same way that they did with the cultural patterns of “the other.” Cultural anthropology thrived on the continuous attention paid to those who were unlike the Westerners, forgetting that to understand the differences one also has to understand what made the West so dominant and so judgmental towards other peoples of the globe. In fact, looking back at the trajectory from “the mind of the savages” to “ethnic identities,” it can be characterized as being wrought from too little social and behavioral science, and from too many preconceived, unquestioned beliefs. Most striking is that hardly anyone took pains to investigate what made the Western way of life so overpowering and seemingly driven by usurpation only. It was seldom questioned why Westerners appeared to do so well, while people in the southern and eastern regions of the world remained caught up in cultural forms that somehow left their practitioners

in a subordinate position. There still is no answer, because the West is only just beginning to ask itself why it was so voraciously preoccupied with its own form of life.

The early involvement of psychology – not as a rigorous science, but as a research practice in which, among others, capacities, moods, and ways of thinking of native peoples were measured – hardly proved a decisive asset in putting into perspective the position of the West so that other outlooks could also prosper. The systematic study of “the savage mind” thus became part and parcel of the civilizing offensive of the Western world, in which the different colonial powers had different interests. As we have very broadly shown, the French were greatly concerned with the mentality of the savages, and they conducted research into the mental capacities of the so-called primitives. The British colonizers focused instead on the workforce and tried to implement measures that would contribute to greater productivity and discipline in the colonies. The measures taken by the British had severe and crude effects and showed little consideration for local customs and practices. From the middle of the nineteenth century until the beginning of the twentieth century, the Germans revealed a more lenient outlook on people with very different backgrounds. Certainly in the beginning, they emphasized that the natives’ use of language made it in principle possible to educate them. A proper *Volksgeist* was considered to be a prerequisite for the training of the primitive mind.

This bird’s-eye view of the developments in various countries reveals that, in order to combat reductionism and outright racism, culture and biology were set apart, and apparently never the twain shall meet. It is a rather sad outcome of science amid a course of events much intertwined with national histories and interests. Culture thinking and biological thinking became entrenched in separate lines of thought and it appears that they held each other in a deadlock.

## **Culture as Salutory Superstition**

In hindsight, the three approaches along national lines blended into an overall approach that suffered from schematic thinking in terms of inferior versus superior. This pertained not only to the mental capacities of the mind as in racist notions of superior stock, but also to cultures as a whole. That is to say, inferiority judgments were clearly implicated in the hereditarian notion of “race.” Also, the “culturalist” position of the *Völkerpsychologie* still took Western superiority for granted. Culture was

something the Western world “possessed,” in the same evident and superior ways in which it once “possessed” the salutary Christian faith.

Christians had always invaded unknown territories, without really questioning their right to do so. The same happened when the idea of culture had replaced the idea of redemption and faith. However, it boils down to the same kind of superstition. Of course, confronted with the clearly well-developed cultures of the East, such as in China and Japan, it was difficult to maintain this posture of Western superiority. Moreover, in the course of the nineteenth century, artists, writers, and even some scholars were inspired by the exotic finesses they encountered on a regular basis. A few aspects of these exotic cultures were copied into Western societies. Enthusiasm for this exotic world left the overall power balance unchanged, however. “Orientalism” – as Edward Said (1979) has called this inquisitive but, in his view, somewhat belittling attitude toward the East – became in some cases part of the imperialist project and could thus be as devastating as downright disdain.

The clear-cut secularization of the civilizing offensive in which religious moral superiority was replaced by cultural superiority resulted in a “soteriological” view of culture, as Christopher Herbert (1991) coined it (*soteria* in Greek means salvation, hence soteriology is the study of religious doctrines of salvation). Herbert describes how Émile Durkheim and Sigmund Freud in particular conceived of human nature as an irrational force, turning itself against humans if not balanced by culture; the latter thus becoming a source of salvation, as previously the Christian faith had been. This time, Western cultural patterns did not liberate other people from sin, but from their hitherto uncultivated, savage ways of life. Needless to say, the export of the Western lifestyle to other parts of the world was an unquestioned (in the eyes of the Westerners at least) yet highly moralizing enterprise. The religious framework of the conversion projects still existed, of course, but it gradually disappeared in the course of the twentieth century to be replaced by secular forms. But, as Herbert observed so cleverly, they were still soteriological. If we want to put it in a daring, but not at all inaccurate, way, soteriological thinking became the main source of placing modernization on a par with Westernization.

Compared to the natives in the colonies, Western civilians had been very successful in balancing their “lower” animal urges and needs, associated with biology, with the “higher” demands and rules of society, associated with mind and culture. These notions were clearly refracted in all sorts of dualistic Western perspectives on the human condition such as will versus representation, body versus mind, id versus superego, indi-

vidual versus society, and so on. Moreover, the strength of that cultural force could be assessed by measuring people's mental endowment, much in the same way that, before this, probing into their innermost sinful inclinations had been a way of assessing people's worth. Culture ended up being, foremost, a commodity of the Western world that could be exported for the benefit of all those people who lacked it. As a result, the Western lifestyle became the measure for all, apparently as a matter of course.

At this point, we touch upon an intriguing observation. The apparent self-evidence of the Western measure somehow also prevented Western scholars from examining the conditions of their very own cultural development and achievements. How had the West become a hegemonic global force in the first place – that is, a *superior* force? Instead of asking that question, the West merely attributed its own power and status to a legacy dating back as far as the Romans and the Greeks, without acknowledging the other civilizations at that time, such as the Babylonian, Arab, and other Eastern sources of Western culture. In the wake of this one-sided usurpation of the classical sources, the Judeo-Christian roots of Western civilization were reaffirmed as the prime reason for feeling morally superior. The concomitant emphasis on superior and inferior people precluded the recognition of other civilizing labor around the globe. Its full and inspiring exploration had to wait until the end of the twentieth century, as we will see in greater detail in Chapter 9.

It is astonishing to discover how little was articulated about what had made Western practices so preponderant. Had the West possessed any idea of what exactly had made its own styles so appealing yet at the same time so dominant, it would have been much easier to share their benign effects. Or, to put it differently, it would have been easier to argue about the ways in which the Western world operated in the regions it dominated. Its devastating impact would probably not have been lessened, but it would not have been sanctioned as much by science as had happened when culture theories came to be defined for the very first time. In short, culture theory as we saw it develop during much of the twentieth century was mainly directed toward the worlds of others, not toward the West itself. The scientifically most misleading idea in culture theory eventually turned out to be the presupposition that the higher human accomplishments, such as certain values and moral ideas, are the prime movers of change. Such thinking intensified the superiority claims of the Western world and slowed down research into the underpinnings of the behavioral patterns that had made the Western world so voraciously hegemonic.

Even today, the lofty notion of culture is often invoked as a kind of *deus ex machina* to explain broad tendencies in civilizations, whereas the things that do the actual work are generally much more mundane. We turn once more to biology, because in the course of developing culture theory this science has always been its antipode, claiming real explanatory power.

## Persistent Patterns and Biology

The opposition that occurred between “biology,” or the natural state, and culture, has proven to be a hindrance rather than an asset to a proper understanding of the interplay between physiology and learned behavioral patterns. As we have already seen, it was from the late nineteenth century onward that both biology and culture theory were used, each in its own distinct way, to corroborate the backwardness of natives. And both domains of thought reinforced the idea that the so-called primitive peoples were not (yet) fit for civilization, which legitimized the strong arm of colonial rule.

To be sure, there were scholars such as Franz Boas who tried to weaken the voracious nature of what could be labeled the “superiority complex” of the Western world, but their attempts had relatively little impact. The two offshoots of Boas’ work – the more psychologically oriented culture and personality school and those scholars who turned culture into the sole civilizing force in an almost exclusive culturalist approach – were indeed a kind of critical counterforce to the hereditarian inferiority/superiority thinking. Yet, theirs were not really viable alternatives. The culture theory approaches dealt inadequately with new ideas about heredity in biology and they also maintained superiority thinking, only now in terms of a ranking of cultures.

Culture theory thus tended to become an isolated effort to understand behavioral patterns by focusing on complexes of cultural traits, divorced from their biological underpinnings. Biology came to be considered a rival discipline, with strong competitive claims about people’s displays of patterned conduct. Historically, as we have just seen, this claim was expressed in terms of race. In more recent times, behavioral biologists and also evolutionary psychologists have tried to come to grips with persistent behavioral patterns in terms of the operations of the brain, nerves, hormones, and genes.

It would be pointless, of course, to ignore the explanatory attempts of biological scientists. There is no doubt about the biological body being

indispensable, but what happens *inside* a single body does not reveal all that much about the styling of behaviors. An example may clarify this point. We all learn to speak a language and we all possess a capacity to speak and understand languages as part of our biological machinery. We can hear, we have vocal chords, we can focus our attention, and so on, and perhaps we also possess some sort of special language-related brain structure. Yet, speaking English or Chinese is not pre-given in our genes or otherwise in our biological makeup. Although the ability to speak at all is dependent on our phylogenetic development, the particular practice of speaking English is learned unobtrusively, within a group of English speakers. “Unobtrusive” in this case means that there is no, or not much, explicit or formal instruction. Rather, during the day, a child is continuously exposed to linguistic utterances by its English-speaking carers. They continuously motivate and correct the child in ways that are hardly noticed as such. While playing, for instance, the child learns how to speak the English language. Were it to be raised in another language community, that very same child, with its very same biological makeup, would speak Chinese or Dutch. There will be formal instruction every now and then, but in general the child learns to speak properly in a very informal way. We know that babies and toddlers practice a great deal. It has been observed, for instance, that they talk to themselves and endlessly rehearse the sounds while they lie in their cot. Parents are also continuously involved in the teaching of the child’s language, enhancing their child’s learning. They give instructions, they point to things and explain them, they correct mistakes while trying to stimulate the child optimally: not too critical, but also not too lenient in accepting grammatical inconsistencies.

What is true for language is also true for the acquisition of many other, perhaps all, behavioral patterns in the group. If only the scientific community would think about it that way. Unfortunately, most often this is not the case. For example, if men behave in a dominant way, it appears that biological inclinations provide the easiest and most likely explanation: It is argued that it is man’s nature to behave that way. Sexual assault and rape are sometimes addressed in a similar vein, and so is being emotionally rude, or being interested only in sex and not in intimacy. It is simply the “biological makeup” of men, and results from age-old hunter-gatherer societies in which all these characteristics were necessary for survival, or at least necessary for the survival of the genes that these men carried. War, violence, and competition are likewise part of the male’s genetic endowment. That all women are biologically predisposed to care for children (a truism, of course), whereas some men – fortunately not

all – are still very reluctant nowadays to do the same, is again understood in terms of an ingrained biological program, despite clear refutation by those men who do make the effort.

The strong point of biology is that human behavior cannot do without evolved physical bodies. In the course of evolution, the human species has developed behavioral forms that are profitable in risky and dangerous circumstances. The standard story of evolution goes like this: Fortuitous mutations in the genetic material that are at the heart of the adaptive process grant some individuals a head start, because of the particular features that allow for a better adaptation to their living circumstances. These individuals subsequently have a better chance of survival or of attracting mating partners, and therefore their genes – carrying the code for their particularly favorable features – have a better chance of being passed on to the next generation. In this manner, much of the variety in the behaviors of different organisms developed along this evolutionary, adaptive route.

These are powerful insights, but all the same it seems that their explanatory power is overstated if we affirm the claim of evolutionary psychologists that they have found the key to explaining human behavioral patterns almost exclusively in terms of evolutionary adaptations. By including humans in the animal world – which in a sense is legitimate, of course – it is too easily assumed that behavioral differences between man and other animals are a matter of degree. Moreover, evolutionary biologists and evolutionary psychologists prefer to select their examples from the domains of sex and procreation, competition, dominance, cheating, and all sorts of behaviors that involve taking care of offspring. These behaviors are indeed closely related to biological functioning, and the examples demonstrate striking commonalities between humans and animals. However, evolutionary explanations based on such examples are usually very general and imprecise with respect to the vast array of behaviors that do not immediately involve the exemplified behaviors.

Frans de Waal (2009) takes a different stance. He claims that human and animal behaviors do need a shared research perspective. This is provided in new ideas about the neurological assets humans and animals have in common. The well-known mirror neurons that come into play once the perspective of the other is taken, and the Von Economo neurons that account for the complex neurochemical processes behind intuition, occur in both humans and apes, and in some other mammals. As many other authors argue as well, it is very likely that these neurological structures are indispensable in judging complex, predominantly social, situations. However, as research by Michael Tomasello (1999, 2009)



reveals, it is precisely in complex social situations that some capacities in humans give rise to cognitive and symbolic accomplishments that other animals seem to lack. In particular, behaviors that involve fully fledged cooperation and normative understanding (such as prohibitions, promises, future expectations, and things we take for granted) seem to surpass the built-in capacities of other species. In the next chapter, we will elaborate on this theme in much greater detail. For now, the important point is that although it is clear that proof of specialized equipment in humans and animals strengthens the evolutionary bond between them, further findings about the use of these capacities also include another message: Comparing man and animal involves a lot more than pointing toward the behaviors of individuals, driven by their physiology. It is precisely in interaction with others, or in a group, that some crucial capacities bloom in humans but are absent in other animals.

## Beyond Biologism and Culturalism: Organisms in the Plural

There is no behavior without bodies, or, as Jacob Moleschott once stated, “*Ohne Phosphor keine Gedanken*” [No thoughts without phosphor]. Thanks to all sorts of new techniques in brain imagery, we have to formulate it even more strongly: All human behavior involves our nervous system, in particular our brain. And, to some extent, much of our brain activity can be visualized. For example, recent research has shown that it will soon be possible to use EEGs to diagnose a burn-out, since those who suffer from this affliction show brain activity that emits lower brain activity levels in the cortex compared to non-burnout people.

These are promising findings but they also pose a familiar problem. Just as in the past, the role of biology in the production of behavioral patterns or styles can easily be exaggerated. We have to avoid exclusive biologism as much as the exaggerated accounts of cultural phenomena that have no connection with the physical body at all, as we observed above.

The perspective on “biology” and “culture” that we follow throughout this book is inspired by enactive theory, as put forward by, among others, Humberto Maturana and Francisco Varela (1992) and Varela, Evan Thompson, and Eleanor Rosch (1991). Enactivism focuses on the particular way in which organisms are embodied. This has immediate consequences for the types of interactions they can engage in, both with their material environment and – most importantly for our argument – with other organisms. One crucial insight of enactivism is that cognition,



including human cognition, depends on the particular embodiment of an organism. Another is that the production of meaning, particularly human meanings, is dependent on the types of mutual interactions that organisms (here, humans) can engage in, based on their typical embodiment.

An example may clarify what we mean. Human behavior includes not only clearly physical actions such as looking, grasping, and moving, but also mental operations such as thinking, intending, and, to a large degree, talking. The typical way in which humans are embodied determines the range of possible behaviors within which they can operate. It determines how they are disposed in the world. To use the example of human language again, our speech requires, among other things, the physical presence of vocal chords, ears, and all kinds of sensorimotor paths in the nervous system to establish relations between components in the body. Had we had different vocal chords, ears, eyes, limbs, brains, and so on, we would have perceived a different world and subsequently we would have enacted a different kind of language – such as that of dolphins perhaps, or songbirds, which is dictated by different ways in which they are embodied. Thus, in order to understand human language, we need to understand the human bodily dispositions that enable and confine language production in the first place.

Yet, in order to find the key to language production, it is not enough to study the biology of one single body and to limit the perspective to its interior operations. Language typically is a social affair, in the sense that it can only occur in a community of practitioners. If, hypothetically speaking, a man were born solo on the proverbial deserted island, and if he were to grow up never encountering another living being, that man would probably never invent a language by himself, as there would be nobody to relate to. Consequently, that man would probably never develop a sense of “other” and would therefore probably also lack a sense of “self.” In order to study language, then, we have to understand that it first and foremost belongs to people’s life world, as Ludwig Wittgenstein has disclosed. “Languaging” is essentially the activity in which all communicating partners are involved and in which they mutually orient each other or, most typically, in which they direct each other’s attention.

It takes two to tango, but also two – at the very least – to communicate linguistically. Although it is vital to grasp how the biological embodiment of an individual provides the substratum for abilities like hearing and vocalization, it is equally important to understand the particular interactions of those embodied individuals (i.e., minds in the plural) that give rise to language as a communicative practice. Put another way, we need to understand how embodied persons in a community mutually enact lan-

guage. Language is not a phenomenon to be found locked in the individual minds or heads of people. Nor is it a *sui generis* phenomenon, free-floating in society and there for individuals to tap into. That assumption falls subject to the epistemological error singled out in the previous chapter: Observed body-independent regularities are falsely believed to become causal forces that determine the behavior of the interacting bodies – from which these patterns were derived in the first place. Language only occurs as an ongoing coordinated practice between embodied persons.

With respect to the contents of language, we will see in greater detail in the next chapter that meaning production is the same as the act of “linguaging” itself. Therefore we can also say that all *meanings* arise as a practice in which the interacting partners mutually orient each other, or each other’s attention. For now, we draw the conclusion that meanings cannot exist pre-given in the heads or minds of individuals. They only occur in a social interaction, enacted by embodied persons.

### “Reclaiming the social”

This phrase is taken from John Greenwood (1994). From the moment of birth, a human being is surrounded by other humans and continues to be so until her or his moment of death. Even a hermit was long surrounded by others – long enough to be raised as a human being. Indeed, to become a human being it takes a community of others who raise, motivate, guide, and teach the newborn members of society. Without the proper stimulation of a baby, the development of some crucial capacities would not come about or would be hampered. Eyesight, tactility, and overall development may remain rudimentary when maternal deprivation occurs; this is linked to a deprivation of physical and emotional stimulation, as experiments on animals such as cats or rat pups have shown.

In human infants, although there is no laboratory experimentation with deprivation, the developmental lags that result from understimulation are well known too.<sup>5</sup> Occasionally, a “wild” child is found in a cellar or a dungeon, where it has been fed but not interacted with. It turns out to be impossible to reprogram these individuals into adapted citizens because some physical, cognitive, and emotional capacities have not developed as they should during the crucial phases.

One might ask if these feral children are truly human, and indeed this question was posed by the carers of the Indian wolf children Kamala and Amala in 1920, and by the carers of the famous Victor, the wild boy of Aveyron. The way in which humans develop as humans – or “human ontogeny” – is dependent on their social environment (i.e., the

environment in which they and others grow up). This is a simple fact that nevertheless is easily overlooked, and certainly underexposed in many accounts of the developing organism. For this is all too often a single organism in a pre-given and purely physical environment.

But even the pre-given quality of the environment is currently under discussion by scientists who claim that the individual enacts his or her world, instead of merely adapting to the external world. The dominant idea is that the environment is a constant, relative to the individual who operates within it. As a consequence of environmental features, such as the climate or food resources, the individual follows a behavioral strategy to cope better with that environment. At the same time, some individuals are from birth better equipped to cope with the environment, which leads to greater reproductive success and in turn to a wider spread of their genes and traits within the population by natural selection. And, of course, as the climate or environment changes (perhaps because of the behavior of the organisms themselves), adaption has to keep pace in order to ensure optimal fit in the new conditions.

This traditional view on evolution typically encompasses three interlocked notions: (1) Natural selection acts on individuals as an external force, optimizing the fitness of individuals over generations; (2) traits are innate features of an individual that are coded for in the genetic program of that individual; and (3) heredity is the transmission of those traits and genetic programs to the next generation. In this view, then, natural selection appears to be the force that operates on fixed traits, ontogeny is the unfolding of the pre-given genetic program during an individual's life, and evolution itself entails the changes in the gene pool of a population. Adaptation, therefore, is the immediate consequence of natural selection, resulting in a progressive phylogenetic and ontogenetic fitting-in of independent individual organisms in their pre-given environments.

Enactive theorists in biology and cognition challenge the notion of an environment that exists independently of the organism operating within it. These scientists claim that evolution is not so much about the *optimization* of adaptation to the environment, but more about the ongoing *conservation* of adaptation. Organisms continually respond to changes in the environment and subsequently continually change that environment. These changes lead to new states in both the organism and the environment, resulting in adaptation of the organism, evoking changes in the environment, and so on. Hence, there is co-ontogeny of organism and environment. They bring forth one another (hence “enactive”). Their

ongoing interplay is mutual, like a dance. Any adaptation by the organism is valid as long as the organism survives. Over generations this results in a myriad *viable* forms or phenotypes, rather than an evolutionary summit of optimized phenotypes.

The upshot of this enactive argument is that natural selection is no longer conceived of as a force, but rather as an observation in hindsight. The underlying mechanism is the continuous adaptation of the organism to its environment (including of course other actors) during its ontogeny, as well as the co-determination of organism and environment in an ongoing drift (rather than a set direction). The environment is no longer independent of, or external to, the organism, but instead co-constitutive: Organism and environment need to be seen as a developing unity in which each brings forth the other. When the environment is a social environment – which for humans is continually present – the co-ontogeny of two or more individuals is much easier to imagine. Nevertheless, such a perspective is virtually absent in the literature on evolutionary biology or developmental psychology. We will continue to make it a key point in our discussions in this book, referring to it as mutual coordination or mutual attuning. We can now claim that it takes at least *two* to develop at all as a *single* human organism.

These may be all be counterintuitive notions, to those who are used to the dominant ideas and metaphors in (evolutionary) psychology or cognitive science, which tend to see the acquisition of meaning as an individual affair: Within the confines of one single organism, information from the environment is obtained and transformed into behavioral output. Cognitivism, for instance, has long claimed that the minds of individuals act like a computing machine, receiving information (“data,” such as words) from the outside world and recoding it into understandable meanings. In received psychological disciplines, the idea prevails that meanings are essentially representations of the outside world that somehow become internalized by individuals and subsequently become shared among different individuals in the group.

Conversely, received evolutionary psychology holds that social circumstances in a distant past led to a particular adaptive program that over many generations became hard-wired into the brain. For a human being in the twentieth century, then, these age-old instinctive programs or strategies of adaptation still control his or her functioning in everyday situations: facilitating cooperation in the soccer team, finding mating partners in a bar, outperforming competitors in business, channeling moral behavior in a religious community, and so on. The problem here is similar to

that of cognitivism: Evolutionary psychologists assume that the meaningful social practices are pre-given, only this time in the human genome. A tendency toward cooperation or competition may be evolutionarily established, to be sure. But what about a specific adaptive program that involves very specific human meanings, such as religion or art? Either it must be assumed that they result from very *general* underlying social tendencies such as cooperation, which can no longer account for the coming about of very *specific* meaning systems in a human society, such as religion or art, or it must be assumed that these meaningful practices are *themselves* biologically given, or inborn, which in turn cannot account for the enormous variety and rapid change of meanings and meaning systems worldwide. The metaphor of memes – mental genes that spread, adapt, and copy over generations of people – is embraced by some evolutionary thinkers, but it cannot do the trick either, because again this would constitute the kinds of fallacies (in terms of metaphors and outward forces that blueprint the behaviors of individuals) that we identified in Chapter 1.

In an attempt to deal with the production of meaning, all of these alternatives focus on the *isolated* individual. They subsequently try to establish how she or he acquires meanings individually, either from out there in the pre-given world or from deep within his or her own organism. In language we can treat meanings and words as independent and out-there entities, but that presupposes that we already operated in language and hence in meanings. How we manage “to language” in the first place therefore remains unintelligible if we start from pre-given meanings. In line with enactive theories of cognition we hold that a theory of meaning should focus on the inherently social nature of meaning, as an affair between embodied human agents. We always deal with minds and organisms in the plural. Consequently, the “content” of meanings cannot be found in the firing patterns of neurons but depends on the particular practices of mutual orientation in a community. This does not deny that firing neurons contribute significantly to performing practices; however, their activity cannot represent the subject matter of meanings.

So we rephrase a point made earlier by quoting a statement attributed to Wolf Singer: one mind is no mind. Hence it becomes understandable that the variety of meanings is virtually unlimited, as the variety of social practices is virtually unlimited as well. But we have already seen that the embodiment of human beings sets limits on what *can* be enacted. As long as we are not able to see ultraviolet light, it will not be part of our everyday meaningful interactions – except for some researchers in specific laboratories, perhaps. Conversely, the way in which we *are* embodied must be included in any account of how meanings are produced in our

communities. Or, to put it a little differently, our *physical* makeup itself is an important source for the meanings we create.

Excluding biology in a culturalist account proved to be unfruitful, but excluding the social origin of meaning production when accounting for the behavior of human individuals is equally fruitless. What remains, then, is the task of explaining how biological operation is related to meaningful actions and experiences. The formal underpinnings of that task are taken up in enactivist accounts, for example in the work of Cor Baerveldt (1998). As we will continue to see here, the key to understanding meaning production is to be found in the communal practices in which embodied individuals are continuously involved.

## **Biological Affordances of Meaning**

Although meaning is an inherently social affair, it is never really divorced from our biological substratum. We need that substratum to mutually produce meaning. However, imagine that we encounter a person that we find particularly beautiful, or big and strong, or small and delicate, or male, or female; we then immediately and mostly automatically ascribe all sorts of meanings to that person on the basis of the “hard facts” that come with the physique of that person. This implies that there is already some sort of meaning in our perceptions. We often treat a very beautiful or tall person differently than we would treat a person who is inconspicuous or much smaller than we are, whether we intend to do so or not. These immediate perceptions carry meanings that are often compensated for by sayings such as looks or size don’t matter, we should look for the true heart of people, wit can compensate for strength, and so on. These are wise lessons, but they also indicate that there is a class of meanings that is tied to the embodiment of people and that is important in social interactions. Therefore, this class must somehow be incorporated in our account of how behavioral patterns come about.

If one man stands tall and sharply dressed in front of another, small man dressed in filthy and ragged clothes, it would be very surprising if the interaction that follows is not dictated by the way the respective men look. Disdain and admiration will almost certainly be part of the interaction. Most likely, traits of male dominance and perhaps competition that came into existence during evolution will play a role as well. But it would clearly go too far to say that ragged or fine clothes are simply evolutionarily ingrained signs of dominance and submission. In human relations there will be an immediate involvement of meanings such as honor, modesty,

or good taste, to name but a few examples. These phenomena signify much more than just the straightforward reproductively important message “I can take good care of you and your children” or “I have really good genes.” Nor is it fruitful to say that our complex human meanings are just elaborate forms of basic functions to be found anywhere in the animal kingdom, such as colorful feathers or big antlers. The point should be that evolutionary principles such as dominance and fitness are included in a wider social order of meaningful human practices and patterned behaviors.

What is eventually brought forth in these human practices are meanings in which “biology” is often co-constitutive, rather than excluded. They are “acts of meaning,” as Jerome Bruner (1990) has called them. Halfway through the twentieth century, he was one of the first to launch the cognitive revolution in psychology, constituting the received view on cognition which held for decades and is presently reworked into an enactive framework. This revolution was directed at the dominance of behaviorism in psychology, with its emphasis on observable behavior. Bruner’s emphasis on cognition did not, however, imply that human behavior was only mental or propositional. Acts of meaning involve the entire physical and, above all, expressive bodies that partake in the everyday meaningful practices of the group members, and include rituals, gestures, and other forms of expression. In the next chapter, we will look in detail at this important theme.

### Reconciling cultural and biological meanings in practice

It is an undeniable fact of life that a woman can only have a limited number of pregnancies. In her early 50s, the menopause restricts her fertility. For men, age is less relevant to the production of healthy offspring. No wonder that males develop a preference for young women, are sexually promiscuous, and are less critical in the selection of a partner than women are, or so evolutionary psychologists argue. Conversely, women are far more selective in their choice of mating partners. They are much more conscious of the qualities that a man has to have such as security, wealth, health, and other beneficial assets for the woman and her offspring.

These different sex strategies have evolved over countless generations. Moreover, the fact that only a woman can have children and that only her body is involved in the production of the offspring – at least to such an extent that the male contribution is hardly worth noticing – usually results in a totally different bond between mother and child,



compared to the bond between father and child. Subsequently, the social flexibility of new mothers is often restricted, relative to that of new fathers. Such a state of affairs may limit women's ambitions, as is the case in many Western countries nowadays. But to say that there exist biological constraints that facilitate certain social meanings and not others is not the same as saying that there are also biological constraints on women's involvement in the workforce. It is the social fabric of everyday life that leaves little room for the career ambitions of women and it is this fabric that capitalizes on obvious biological constraints. By means of counterforce, it is not hard to motivate men to take care of their children too. Persistent traditional gender roles are nevertheless ubiquitous in many Western societies, and when tied to evolutionary arguments they become easy excuses (predominantly for men) to maintain the status quo.

The unchangeable biological facts have therefore to be incorporated in all sorts of meanings around gender roles. The manner in which this incorporation occurs is, however, open to discussion. The social arrangements are not necessarily dictated by the biological facts. Likewise, when rape or other criminal acts are merely understood as extreme yet natural dispositions of an individual, it is easily forgotten that those behaviors are deviant because of the normative restrictions that are created in a particular society. This means that something has also gone wrong in the acknowledgment of the social arrangements; for most people, the recognition of such arrangements provides sufficient constraint of their tendencies or desires. Biology should not be used as an easy explanation.

As another example, we take the institution of marriage. In many contemporary societies, monogamy is the only form of marriage that is allowed. However, some communities permit or promote polygamy, polygyny, or polyandry. Certainly in the past, men could have more wives. The particular form has or had to do with environmental circumstances; sometimes they were so harsh, for instance, that only polygamy would ensure the survival of a sufficient number of children. The biological makeup of the men and women involved is the same in each form of marriage. And in all cases, the biological differences between men and women with respect to procreation are incorporated in the particular organization of everyday life. Yet the meanings and feelings involved in matrimony may vary widely.

For a boy or a girl in most Western countries, falling in love is the prerequisite *par excellence* for a lasting and stable relationship. Marriage should result from a relationship in which this special person was selected freely, involving a personal choice without any interference from outside.



Fairytales about longing for a beautiful princess, or waiting for a prince on a white horse, add to this romantic image of falling in love and pair bonding. In the predominant Western ideal, this freedom even goes so far as to assume that if an individual has no free partner choice, falling in love must be impossible. Conversely, in parts of India or the Middle East, for instance, marriage is usually arranged by the parents. In this case, falling in love is not necessarily considered to be the decisive factor for pair bonding. Both social arrangements belong to different aspects of the interactions between men and women. This proves that by means of the same biological system, suitable feelings of intimacy are generated in the particular social arrangements in non-Western countries as well. Again, the point is that similar biological facts can be included in a variety of ways into the meaningful practices of people. We have to be careful, then, not to create a rigid opposition between people's biological equipment and the social arrangements that they enact.

### Persistent behavioral patterns in a new environment

Whoever follows the behavior of adolescents in city streets through a couple of generations will quickly observe changing colors, sounds, fashions, languages, and other behavioral patterns. We can call all these changing forms "culture" or "street culture," but our analysis of early culture theories has taught us that we are better off focusing on the local community of practitioners and on the practices themselves. Local practices force us to look for the local niche in which the practices were taught. We give another real life example: A person from Somalia wants to start a new business in the Netherlands. He needs a bank to provide the necessary money, so he makes an appointment with a Dutch bank employee. At the important appointment, the entrepreneur does not look straight into the employee's eyes, as a sign of respect or politeness that the Somali is used to making. In the Netherlands, however, it is customary to look people in the eye when we are in conversation; not for too long, and we shouldn't stare at each other, but there should be regular eye contact. Constantly looking downward and avoiding eye contact suggests an unreliable attitude. Thus, while the entrepreneur from Somalia believes he is doing the right thing in the right situation, the bank employee may become extremely suspicious of the behavior of his client.

The situation may seem easy to resolve by giving proper instructions to both participants. The employee can read in a fashionable "cultural training" book that looking downward is considered to be respectful in

some cultural groups. The applicant, on the other hand, can read that making eye contact with the person we depend on is a Dutch way of avoiding being seen as untrustworthy. However, the practices of lowering the eyes in front of someone of a higher status or, on the contrary, making eye contact with someone of equal status, are highly automated reactions that are hard to alter. Clearly, it requires more than just information or instruction. The respective practices have been learned in the local community from skilled practitioners. Indeed, they have been practiced time and again, until they have become ingrained in the body and automatically available. The practitioner has grown accustomed to this way of behaving and has developed a certain feeling for when it is or is not appropriate to display it. The local group of already skilled practitioners is indispensable for learning the proper behavior. At the same time, they are full bodily practices, because crucially they involve the training and shaping of the expressive, lived body. This is true of both the automated display of respect of the Somali entrepreneur and the Dutch employee's interpretation of the applicant's behavior as being untrustworthy.

To have such experiences therefore involves much more than just instruction or information. Often, these practices are even acquired without any formal instruction at all. It may be handy as a label to call these practices a feature of the Somali or the Dutch culture, but that is the wrong place to look for their origin. This must be sought in the often unobtrusive processes of trying, imitating, being corrected, repeating, searching for approval, and so on. Looking at someone and interpreting his or her behavior is no less a matter of practice and training, of successful attempts and failures within a community of practitioners, than is learning to kick a football or learning to discriminate between different sorts of wine. We will return to this point in the next chapter.

In order to understand the uneasy situation between the applicant and the bank employee, we have to develop some sensitivity to the local practices in which their respective behaviors and experiences were shaped. There are numerous examples of situations to which the same principles apply, including the display of machismo, female submissiveness, paternal harshness, or ascetic lifestyles. An appeal to culture as a force that has shaped people's behavior in these ways is of course beside the point. A focus on local cultural practices, on the other hand, provides an opportunity to analyze mismatches between the circumstances in which the behavior was learned and those in which it was applied.

A problem in certain countries in northwestern Europe is that some young boys of North African immigrant families sexually harass Western girls. Instead of simply arguing that their non-Western culture is to blame, it would yield more insight if we focus on this practice that the boys probably do not want to give up. It is most likely that the males want to have sexual dominance over women they feel they need not respect, since the girls are not part of the their own (cultural) group. Western girls dress extremely seductively in the eyes of these boys, displaying independence – in contrast to the way in which the girls of their own group dress and behave. It is precisely this way of dressing and the independence it signifies that trigger the male prowess, which is much less likely when they approach girls in their own group. It demonstrates that the experiences of the boys were formed in a different community than those of the Western girls; hence in the Western situation a mismatch occurs of intimidation and sexual aggression from the boys when some girls do not play the expected submissive role. On the one hand there are immediate patterns of behavior that are acquired in a society in which sexual equality between men and women is the point of departure. This usually implies the right of women to dress and behave as they want, without risking disrespect. On the other hand there are immediate behavioral patterns that originate in a group in which male sexual dominance is endemic. Here, women are often expected to remain low key if they do not want to lose the men's protection and respect. The mismatch that occurs in the example above pertains to the required forms of mutual respect. To be sure, such analysis should not excuse obnoxious behaviors; it is nevertheless an approach that is much more fruitful than an analysis in terms of clashing civilizations or neglected cultural norms.

A similar argument can be applied to murders that are committed after the violation of family honor. A useful account of what these murders may entail is provided in Gabriel García Márquez's book *Chronicle of a Death Foretold* (1984). In this novel two men prepare to commit a murder after it has become obvious that their sister, who has just married, was not a virgin. After a long hesitation, the bride reveals to her mother the name of her lover. The novel dissects in great detail the subsequent planning of the murder by the brothers, and above all the involvement of the entire village community in this process. It is not two individuals with murderous inclinations who commit the murder, but two members of a closely interrelated community, in which every member in one way or another participates in the chain of events that inevitably leads to the fatal outcome. Márquez describes the honor killing as a local practice in which

it is easier for every community member to display the required emotions and feelings of hatred and indignation over the lost honor (themselves part of an embodied training process in the community), than it is to refuse to participate in the preparations for what turns out to be a serious crime. Of course, the novel is fiction, but Márquez is a keen observer of human conduct. Because he describes the entire social arrangement in which the village members are immersed, it is immediately revealed that the impetus for the crime does not originate in the personal strivings of one or two individuals. It is rather the close mutual attunement of the behaviors and sentiments of the villagers that – in this case – leads to the seemingly inevitable murder.

The honor killing in Márquez's book is not the result of the village culture as such, nor can it be derived from prevailing cognitive norms and values. It is to be found instead in the locally and mutually acquired compelling practices that are mobilized by socially required sentiments, feelings, and opinions. (We will see in the next chapter how this is the case.) The embodied nature of the practices, in every member of the village community, partly explains why the patterns are so persistent and compelling. In this respect, Márquez's example describes beautifully how the tragedy cannot be prevented, even with the best intentions of some individuals. It teaches us that, in the real world, in order to understand phenomena such as honor killings, the focus should change from mere "culture" as a mysterious force, or from mere "individual responsibility," to the mutual coordination of behavioral patterns and feelings. What should be understood is how different members of a community contribute to the practices in which the violation of honor *has* to be revenged. That is something very different from an analysis of culture in terms of honor killings as a pervasive norm in certain societies.

### Training and practice

It should be clear from the above examples that training and exercise are as important in behavioral practices as they are in mastering sports or mastering a language. We learn how to play golf or how to speak a language properly within a community of skilled practitioners. They decide whether we are apprentices who still have to learn and train a great deal, or whether we can move on to the next level. When beginning to learn a new sport, lessons will consist of verbal instructions along with some exercises. We need to know the rules of the game, the names of the equipment, how to position ourselves, and so forth. After a while, it is perhaps the imitation of a skilled practitioner that propels the learning process.

He or she puts us in the correct position and shows what went wrong and what could be done easier and better. But there is a limit to this instruction. In the end, we have to begin to feel “from within” what is the correct move, swing, club, angle, force, and so on. This feeling from within is crucial for becoming an expert. From then on, a process of further refinement and improvement can begin. The instructor becomes less and less important, but there will always be a need for people who have fully mastered the skills to give their judgment. Implicitly, they define what is the right way to play the game.

In cultural practices, there is usually no clear instructor, and explicit instruction is mostly absent as well. How to lower our eyes with the proper timing in order to seduce someone, or how to convey respect or grief, is hardly ever made explicit. Yet, like the practice of playing golf, the proper behavior is learned within the community, through imitation, making mistakes, being corrected, rehearsing, and so on. And again, for the skilled practitioners, ultimately their feeling from within is indispensable for a proper display under the proper circumstances.

In the mastering of sports, something real and tangible is at stake. But the same is true for training for all kinds of other cultural practices. What is at stake involves the patterns of behavior that make someone a true member of the local community, and at the same time these are the characteristics for that particular group. Doing the right thing in the proper way like others is an important indication that we belong to the group. This is easily seen when a person does *not* master the behavioral styles that for others have become a matter of course. People who lack the timing, flair, or the refinement that others display effortlessly run the risk of becoming outlaws. Not necessarily so, compensation is possible, but they are visibly in the danger zone, on the outskirts of group membership. The flip side is that all the skilled members together reveal the behavioral patterns that characterize the community. We have already argued how these patterns arise in the eyes of an observer, as a consequence of individuals’ mutual tuning and training of the practices that others have already mastered. In other words, what is at stake in cultural practices is first and foremost our identity, as well as the characteristic behavioral patterns that make our group so specific.

## Notes

- 1 Sir Richard Francis Burton, who together with Frederick Foster Arbuthnot translated the *Kama Sutra* (1883) from Sanskrit, and who also published *The*

*Book of the Thousand Nights and a Night* in 10 volumes (1885), is a good example of someone with an unusual appetite for sexual affairs and therefore a sensitive observer. Another example is Verrier Elwin, a missionary who lost his faith and married an indigenous girl, divorced her, and married another indigenous girl. He studied passionately and in detail the sexual lives of the youth of the Indian Muria tribe. He published the extensive work *The Muria and their Ghotul*, later summarized in *The Kingdom of the Young* (1968).

- 2 The concept of race is, of course, highly problematic. In this chapter, we use “race” as a historical term. With respect to the concept of “racism,” we follow Graham Richards (1997) in differentiating between “racism” and “racialism.” Both racism and racialism took the existence of races for granted. Racism referred to the hostile and derogatory attitudes and practices with respect to people of another “race.” Racialism constrained itself: It did nothing more than account for differences between people in terms of the biological features of race.
- 3 Director Bert Sliggers of the Teylers Museum in Haarlem, the Netherlands, has documented this in episode 22 of the Dutch TV series *In het kielzog van Darwin* [In Darwin’s wake], broadcast by the VPRO on February 28, 2010.
- 4 Wundt’s magnum opus *Völkerpsychologie* (1900–1920) was the culmination of this initial psychological approach to culture and language. Yet it remained a kind of anthropology, redirecting research into the natives’ minds by including myth, language, and other elements of the alleged spirit of a people.
- 5 There is the serendipitous finding of Marianne Riksen-Walraven (2002) who stimulated toddlers together with their parents and found *years later* that those children who had been stimulated showed much more resilience.

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## A Psychological Perspective on Culture

In Chapter 2 we encountered a split between culture theory on the one hand and biological accounts of behavior on the other. Both held each other in a deadlock, which we try to overcome in this chapter by giving biology its proper niche in our psychological analysis of culture. In order to prevent culture being isolated from biology, as was the case throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth century, we hinted at the possibility of going beyond culturalism and biologism, not by taking the individual organism as the point of departure, but instead its embodiment and its embeddedness in a social world right from the outset. Yet, putting culture and biology in opposition to each other is still a widespread practice among behavioral scientists. This manifests itself in the ongoing debates about whether animals have culture, or to what extent humans resemble animals, in an attempt to merge both domains on the evolutionary ladder. Current research into animal cognition and animal affect shows, however, that we should reason the other way around: Many animals possess capacities and features that prefigure human ones, but at the same time they make very clear how much more elaborate and more complex human features and forms are. Perhaps, so it seems, one or two cognitive capacities occur typically only in humans, albeit crucial ones. We proceed on these premises and try to come to grips with human capacities that are built from animal ones, yet without reducing the human social domain to essentially cumbersome animal behavior. In other words, in this chapter

we will develop a psychological perspective on human culture in which the crucial role of biology is already implied.

## **Crucial Cognitive Capacities**

Humans, great apes, and some other mammals share a number of cognitive capacities. Compared to those of humans, the cognitive capacities of other animals are, however, relatively limited no matter how stunning their achievements sometimes are. Humans also show a comparatively greater variety of social behaviors. Michael Tomasello (1999) explains that some mammals and great apes have memory for time and place; they are able to follow the movements of objects; they are able to classify objects of similar appearance; they can discriminate individuals in their own species; and they deploy strategies to conquer other group members in all sorts of competitive tasks. Fraud, for instance, is observed in the behavioral patterns of some primates, and so is effective cooperation in problem solving.

It is not only conscious but also self-conscious behavior that belongs to the animal world. Self-recognition experiments involving apes with a mark on their forehead and placed in front of a mirror have been well known for a long time and were summarized by Anderson and Gallup (1999). Moreover, some other mammals, such as elephants, have also been found to be able to recognize themselves in a mirror.

Humans are experts in intentional behavior, but other animals also reveal forms of intentionality. For example, by building a pile of boxes of different sizes in order to reach a banana, a chimpanzee demonstrates the intention of reaching the fruit that is hanging from the ceiling. But the ape will probably not build a pile in which the biggest box is put on the floor first, while the smallest is on top. It will build any pile, as long as it can keep its balance in reaching the banana. The vestibular system dictates the piling of the boxes, so to speak. This piling practice is confined to the animal's bodily makeup, and most likely its imagination does not go beyond it. By human standards, then, this is a rather simple form of intentionality.

Yet, more complex forms of intentionality also occur. An ape that, by pretending not to see any food, tries to preclude the discovery of the food by another ape somehow has to imagine the viewpoint of others, in order to be able to deceive them. The capacity to imagine the perspective and intentions of others is often referred to as having a "theory of mind." Tomasello (2009) demonstrated that in human children this capacity shows up at around nine months old. At this point, human babies begin to see and understand other individuals as individuals with intentions. No

longer is merely a series of subsequent events or behaviors observed, but babies start to recognize an extra dimension in the chain of events, in terms of the intentions and motives of others. For example, they begin to understand that a finger points at something for a reason, and so they start to follow the carer's gaze. In other animals, this "cognitive revolution" of understanding that others are intentional beings as well rarely occurs. Only experiments with primates (especially chimpanzees) have shown that individual animals understand that conspecifics and human carers are intentional beings like themselves.

But, Tomasello (2009) argues, a striking divide is found between humans and primates when engaging either in competitive situations or in practices of collaboration. Unlike humans, chimpanzees show no desire to engage in cooperative activities unless there is some personal gain (e.g., food) involved. Ultimately, their interests are personal and not social, the author argues. For example, animals such as wolves engage in group hunting to drive their prey into an ambush. From an observer's standpoint, it may seem that the individual members of the pack mutually coordinate their actions, that they are aware of each contributor's role, and that perhaps they understand role reversal (e.g., "If I take the lead now, the others must become followers"). Christopher Boesch (2005) has argued that these cognitive capacities are indeed present in chimpanzees hunting in groups. However, Tomasello (2009) claims that the hunting roles can be explained in terms of individual motives only. In addition, experiments revealed that chimpanzees do *not* understand role reversal, nor do they understand the *collaborative* intentions of others. Humans, on the other hand, have developed socio-cognitive skills and motivations that are directed toward complex forms of cooperation. According to Tomasello, humans have developed the skills and motivations for "shared" intentionality – the motivation to mutually engage in comparable ways in situations of cooperation. Other animals only understand the intentionality of conspecifics in competitive situations.

It is an ongoing debate among ethologists and biologists as to whether there are exclusive human cognitive capacities. But for our argument it does not matter much whether humans are unique or not. Answering this question does not yield much extra insight anyway. Far more significant is the question of whether we can identify cognitive capacities that form the basis of complex social relations and interactions, such as those that we can observe in humans and indeed to some extent in other animals as well. The important point in Tomasello's work is that the capacity to display high-level intentional behavior, and particularly to understand the intentions of others in collaborative situations, appears to be such a

crucial cognitive capacity in the development of individuals within groups. These functions open up the possibility of engaging in complex triadic relations. That is, they enable subjects to orient each other's attention and behaviors in relation to a third party; an object, event, or perhaps a conspecific. In this manner, subjects understand that others understand that they (the subjects) understand, and so on. In effect, individuals can then mutually communicate *about* something, which is essentially symbolic interaction.

Frans de Waal (1998) has described in much detail how male chimpanzees organize clever coalitions to make a stronger case against their rivals. This behavior requires considerable planning and insight into what is at stake for themselves and others. It will probably also require symbolic behavior to enable them to communicate about joining forces. It cannot be denied, however, that even now there is not so much evidence for an *extensive* use of symbolic behavior other than in humans. And when symbolic skills are found in animals, they are relatively limited. When humans want to teach animals (human) symbolic behavior, the animals appear relatively difficult to train. For instance, it requires a long period of socialization into a human community before a chimpanzee is able to make sentences using symbols (signs or characters). Well-trained dogs sometimes seem to understand more than 200 human words. But we then also have to take into account that dogs have been bred for centuries and that the animal has been living among humans for many millennia. The dog that "understands" human behavior is therefore above all a domesticated animal and in that sense a very clever one.

So despite an aptness for symbolic behavior – or cultural behavior, as some ethologists prefer to call it – so far only humans seem to display such behavior on an extensive scale. Without wanting to make a moral judgment at the expense of animals, humans clearly do outperform them in the use of symbolic behavior.

As a final note on this matter, we return to the example of the chimpanzee and the boxes. The ape accumulates the boxes in any order that preserves the balance of the pile. Humans usually follow a completely different strategy. They use their imagination to situate themselves in what they have to do. From there, they plan their further actions. They have to put themselves into the position of the boxes, as it were, to discover the best and most stable solution. By using this self-initiated imagination, humans are able to transcend the dictation and parameters of their bodily needs and sensations. Because human imagination is in this case not the result of an external stimulation but is self-aroused, we will refer to this phenomenon as *auto-imagination*.

Many animals probably do have imagination on the basis of body-related needs or on the basis of what they observe, but the example of how primates and humans use the boxes demonstrates that humans are able to step out of their bodies as it were, and project through time and space what their behaviors entail and what the effects are. In this sense, the (auto-)imagination of humans is far greater than that of other animals. In other words, humans have the capacity to invent and manipulate *meanings* that are not just dictated by their possibilities to interact with an object or with another person, related solely to their own embodiment and to the physical presence of the other.

This is not to say that human symbolic behavior and meaning does not involve the body to some degree. After all, bodily orientations such as “above” and “below,” “low” and “high,” “strong” and “weak,” and bodily sensations such as warmth, strength, weakness, etc., are implied in our experience of the world, in our planning, and in our imagination, as George Lakoff and Mark Johnson (1980) have argued. We have already come across this point in the previous chapter. Nevertheless, the human body is no longer dictating the types of interactions we can have with the world. For animals, their own body and the visible, physical presence of the other appear to remain crucial in every interaction. Their interactions are largely instrumental: a stick becomes a tool, a conspecific becomes a protector or a grooming partner. Hardly ever does a stick become a communication partner, and most probably animals do not have extensive fantasies about future plans.

## Meaning and Normativity

Although it is clear from our previous remarks on animal cognition that we do not suppose that there is a Rubicon between cognitive capacities in man and animal that should not be crossed, it is apparent that man’s cognitive capacities are much more elaborate compared to those of other animals. There is strong evidence that the capacity to understand that other beings have intentions as well plays a decisive role. We have already hinted how it opens up the possibility to interact using symbols and meaning. It is precisely this form of intentionality and this type of interaction that appears to dominate the human condition. We will now explain in more detail how this is the case.

Let’s start by assuming that two people are involved in the throwing of a ball. Because both players realize that they are throwing a ball at each other, they can name or label this mutual activity. The words “game” or

“playing,” for instance, may come to refer to the particular joint action of throwing a ball. But this is only possible if one person can imagine that the other will perceive and evaluate the situation in a similar manner. From that moment on, the word “playing” serves to orient the attention of those involved to the kind of mutual activity that “playing” refers to. Eventually, neither the ball nor the activity needs to be present for the people to still understand what “playing” would signify. The word has, then, come to refer to something more or something other than itself. It more or less indicates to the people involved what is expected from them.

Technically speaking, if one person throws or kicks a ball, it involves bodily coordination and some mental planning with reference to the ball. But when two people are involved in the joint action of throwing a ball, it not only involves their own bodily and mental coordination with respect to the ball, but also some coordination of their own behavior in relation to what the other person does. In other words, the people involved need to mutually adjust their behaviors for the joint action to occur. In an uncoordinated way, no sequence would occur and the situation would be no fun at all and would not even be truly social. Therefore, playing with a ball together involves the mutual coordination of the participants’ underlying bodily coordinations. In other words, it requires second-order coordinations of actions.

The word “playing” is itself a form of second-order coordination, because by using that word people jointly focus their attention and actions (mutual coordination) with respect to their own handling of the ball (coordination). Meaning always involves such second-order coordinations of actions. Psychologically speaking, this implies that without exception meaning is social because it always involves a coordination of actions that occurs between individuals. Of course, an individual can invent a new word or a new symbol, but that can only be meaningful in a social context of other meanings. Therefore, the invented meaning still involves the perspectives and orientations of others. The point is not that meaningful content necessarily occurs in mutual *agreement*; the point is that meaning as a phenomenon can only occur in a social situation – that is, in a situation in which people mutually coordinate their behaviors with respect to each other.

Humberto Maturana and Francisco Varela (1992) showed that it requires such a special perspective to understand how meaning arises in a social situation. We have taken up their key point that the coordination of behavior between people is the focal point of analysis. For this reason we repeat the message of the previous chapter: It is impossible for meaning to be pre-given or prestructured in a singular brain. Since meaning as a phenomenon occurs by definition as second-order interactions between

individuals, clearly it cannot be reduced to the biological processes in a single person. Although there is no denying that the brains of the participants contribute significantly to the mutual coordination of actions between individuals, meaning as a social second-order phenomenon cannot be reduced to electric or chemical events in single brains or bodies. Looking for meaning in one brain is like looking for life in sliced-up body parts. Meaning can only be established in a joint activity.

In that sense, human lives are permeated with meaning. It is not only written or spoken language that expresses meaning, but also dance, photography, and music. Rituals allow for meaningful communication as well; about love and death, for instance. However, the coordinating power of language practices in the human domain is strikingly extensive and remains unrivaled. People constantly relate to appointments, rules, promises, obligations, intentions, or prohibitions. It is impossible for us to step out of the order of those linguistic phenomena, as this would imply a retreat from virtually all human interaction. It is impossible to step out of language; just as it is impossible to invent anything we like in the meaningful order that we find ourselves embedded in. We always have to take into account the meanings and meaningful practices that others have already created and that they maintain together.

Thus, for a newcomer in a group, engaging in the meaningful practices of that group requires her or him to enact those practices in concordance with what the already skillful practitioners do. If she or he doesn't, the behavior makes no sense, or it communicates meanings that make the newcomer the odd person out. In order to fully become a member of the group, then, we have to "tune into" the existing practices (behavioral patterns) that present themselves as compelling because they are normative: they imply an "ought." We have to meet and greet, walk and talk like others, in the proper way, such that it becomes recognizable, understandable, and acceptable. The idea of the normative character of mutually coordinated behavior stems from Cor Baerveldt, in Baerveldt and Voestermans (2005). Interestingly, Michael Tomasello (2009) found that, in human infants, there is already a sense of how a game "ought" to be played, based on even a very short history of mutual interactions. When an experimenter suddenly stops to engage in a playful situation, human infants tend to encourage the adult to re-engage in the joint activity. And when the experimenter deviates from the play routine by using a ball in an unusual way, the children tend to correct her in order to restore the conventional use of objects during play (even if that playful interaction is relatively new). In other primates, that early sense of normativity is lacking.



Understanding the normativity of social interactions may be a key to understanding why humans feel compelled not to cross a line that has been drawn in the sand, to give but one example. Living up to such an agreement or convention (also see below) probably involves auto-imagination, as well as understanding the intentions and goals of others, also in a cooperative sense. In this context, a line in the sand becomes symbolic; it means something in the interaction and it is immediately normative: “do not cross,” for instance. Other animals, including great apes, seem unable to agree upon something they invent themselves and that subsequently puts a normative demand on them and on others. In human relations, on the contrary, the normativity of social practices is endemic and highly important in virtually all interactions. It is therefore essential that social scientists understand how humans continuously feel compelled to live up to social agreements and expectations of their own making, whereas other animals don’t.

Very often, the behavioral patterns that are expected, and sometimes even required, of the group members are not dictated or learned in explicit ways. Rather, the “how to” is unarticulated and implied in the way we gradually become part of the group and merge with our social environment through daily exposure, frequent practice, and ongoing correction. Growing up in a community ensures that the proper behavioral patterns become a matter of course as newcomers continuously coordinate their own behaviors with respect to those of already skilled others. In this manner, individuals’ most taken-for-granted everyday routines reveal the styles that are meaningful and that encounter full understanding from the group members. The flip side to this is that the enactment of those styles involves individuals’ unconditional and full engagement. It is not enough to hold on to a few ideas they need to remember; instead it requires their full physical, mental, and affective involvement in the local practices.

In this manner, we can begin to understand how meaningful practices such as promises and prohibitions, though immaterial, are indeed compelling. Émile Durkheim (1894) claimed that a social fact (e.g., a prohibition) can be as coercive to our behavior as a concrete wall. According to Durkheim, its coercive force would stem from the collective consciousness – nowadays we would say “culture.” But since culture cannot be a force that instructs individuals, as we have argued, we need another account for motivation to act in a certain way. We argue that this motivation can only stem from individuals themselves as they adjust their actions and feelings in such a way that their behaviors and affects become shaped in a group-supported fashion. At this point we already



emphasize what we will elaborate upon in a later section: In the proper enactment of meaningful practices, individuals' own embodiment is crucially involved. The compulsion of these required practices is felt and lived bodily. The pattern is not imposed upon us from the outside in the form of internalized representations and ideas, as is so often claimed in the literature. It is enacted by us in concordance with others, involving fully fledged affective lives.

## **Norms and Values Revisited**

The enactive perspective we put forward sheds a different light on the status of norms and values in a society. Norms and values in the social domain are, just like other linguistic phenomena, behavioral coordinations of a second or higher order. This means that first and foremost they are embodied practices. People act in mutually coordinated actions, and if patterns are to be found in those actions, we can begin to formulate a norm or a value. A norm should be viewed as a label (see Chapter 1) that expresses the typical organization of behaviors in a certain group. However, it is a misconception to think that those norms or values themselves are prior, that they have any motivating force, or that they coerce people to act in accordance with them. This is a radical break with the dominant view in the social sciences, particularly in sociology and social psychology, which holds that norms and values are collective or social representations that motivate people to act. That traditional view leads us back to one of our initial problems – that is, explaining where such a norm would get its force from in the first place. It is not the formulated norm itself that is operative and causes the effects, but instead the compelling and normative character of mutually attuned behaviors.

It would be fantastic for social scientists if norms and values were indeed to motivate people in every respect and to organize their behaviors. It would make propagation and change a matter of words and arguments. But that is not the case. Nevertheless, it may appear in many cases as if individuals truly operate from values or similar abstract notions. When freedom of speech is heralded, for example, or when liberty is proclaimed, it seems as if people are indeed motivated by an abstract idea. Yet, precisely in such instances, it should be perfectly clear that the idea does not inform people's feelings, beliefs, or even actions. Rather, their feelings have already been shaped as part of the practices in which freedom and liberty have been voiced or maybe even ritualized to such an extent that our feelings and thoughts become attuned to those of others. Director

Hany Abu-Assad made this point in his movie *Paradise Now* (2005), which tells the story of how suicide bombers succumb to the “ideal of dying for a greater good” in some sort of training process that requires not only a lot of talk and promises, but also threat and constant reorienting of the “chosen ones” by the community of others, to enable them to overcome their fears and doubts. In this movie we encounter the elaborate machinery of social engineering toward one single goal: the disruption of order and the creation of panic by those in charge. Of course it is the people in the lower ranks, usually young children from poor families, who become the executioners of the ideas of the powerful, who keep their own hands clean.

Clearly, the abstract idea is a symbol, useful to refer to and representing the greater cause. But the motivation to fight for that greater good, even at the expense of the individual’s own life, does not stem top-down from that symbol or from the collective or social representations of honor. It can only come from the continual attunement of his or her own feelings and behaviors within a community of others, in which those in charge can set the standard. Following the example of somebody who already sacrificed him- or herself, active appropriation of the language and the outer appearance of solemn honors given to other “martyrs,” a desire to position him- or herself among those precursors, sheer pressure from the own group (itself an example of the coercive tuning of feelings among group members, not of an external force); these all provide the circumstances in which the individual’s behaviors and feelings are shaped and molded.

In terms of politics and policy, a discussion about values is helpful to the extent that we may gain a clearer view of what is expected from everyone. But when there is disagreement or misunderstanding, it does not usually help much to say that clashing or incompatible values are responsible. For example, Justus Veenman and colleagues (Hagendoorn, Veenman, and Vollebergh 2004) at the Erasmus University of Rotterdam carried out research in various north European countries. They established that people originating from areas around the Mediterranean Sea are far more conservative in the country in which they choose to settle than are their fellow countrymen who have stayed at home. Usually this conservatism results from the fact that immigrant key members of the cultural group maintain and recreate the social situation that existed in their country of origin. They recreate the environment to which they had grown accustomed at home, and which facilitates the behavioral routines that make up their identity. Doing so may be easy and comforting in very unfamiliar circumstances. It is not particularly helpful to label this as the

immigrants' "value-orientation" and to put this construct in opposition to the "values" of the majority in the receiving country. What differs above all are daily practices and the ways in which ordinary life is organized around them, including social relations between the sexes, between family members, peers, and so on. A comparison of abstract values tends to pass by the lived, rigid, and taken-for-granted character of people's daily routines. It is here that real differences in social intercourse occur and become tangible. An analysis of artificially constructed "values" remains overly propositional. Moreover, abstract "values" are then falsely believed to be real motivators for action.

It is therefore much more fruitful to try to find out where the stagnant behavioral patterns originate. In some cases they evidently run counter to the common practices that people in the receiving country have been accustomed to. Mastery of these common, everyday practices would contribute to smooth functioning in the society to which the immigrants have turned in order to obtain a better life. Where, then, do obstructions about the desired and functional alternative behavior come from? We are not talking solely about individual cases here. After all, every society has individuals who for some reason are not prepared to comply or are not capable of complying with the lifestyles of the majority. Rather, we are concerned with patterns of behaviors that characterize a larger group of people. Different group-related practices lead to different taken-for-granted everyday patterns in the individual's behavior, feeling, and thinking. Confronted with people who have acquired different everyday practices in a different group, misunderstanding and stilted or awkward social intercourse may quickly result. This is not simply a clash of ideas and cognitions; it is above all a mismatch in experience-near practices and in the feelings and cognitions that go with them.

We give another example of what we wish to convey. For adolescent Moroccan boys it is not expected that they stay at home with the women. The house is a woman's place; the street is the place to be for males. There, the boys can operate outside of the reach of paternal authority. This configuration is commonly demanded by a grown-up male in the homeland, and also when the family is staying in a northwest European country. Being on the streets all the time does not raise any suspicion about the relationship between father and son. However, when a boy from a traditional middle-class Western family is on the streets all the time, we can readily surmise that something is wrong in the parent-child relationship. It is not usually part of the everyday practices of such Western families. Imagine what happens if we reflect on the situation from the Western

perspective: It is easily concluded that Moroccan boys must be having trouble at home, will have problems with authority, and perhaps therefore are liable to anti-social behavior. Moreover, the chances are that Moroccan boys meet Western juvenile delinquents precisely in the streets. Display, pose, and conspicuous consumption are then quickly associated with criminal practices. To be sure, that assessment is often correct, but the different behavioral backgrounds of the Western youngsters compared to those of the Moroccans get lost in the picture. To understand how the behavioral patterns of both the Western and non-Western boys work, the proper level of analysis will again include embodied practices and their acquisition, and not simply norms and ideas.

Thus, we argue, norms and values are deduced from already existing practices in a society. Behavior cannot be produced by the norm that was derived from that behavior in the first place. We can summarize this point with a simple example: Although it is the norm that trains run on time, this norm does not *make* them run in time. It is very difficult to understand what is actually monitoring the schedule keeping and what really causes the trains to run on time. It takes effort to unravel this and it certainly does not help much to invoke the norms and tell the personnel to uphold them, as is too often wrongly attempted. Precisely because this error goes unnoticed in so many instances, the discussion about norms and values is fruitless.

## **The Body in Two Variations**

All human beings possess a body. It is the material substratum of who and what we are. Without it we couldn't exist. Our body is the sum total of all the limbs, bones, tissue, organs, chemicals, fluids, and functions that go with it. It occupies space, it can be observed, measured, and touched. But we do not merely have a body, we also *are* a body. *We* move, see, and act from a perspective in which the body is not first objectified as some kind of instrument with features, but instead feels and expresses itself directly in the world. Through our embodiment we are in the world and through our embodiment the first-person perspective comes into being: I am this body. These two perspectives on the body are the subject of this section. We will see in particular how the expressive body acquires the styles or behavioral patterns that are characteristic of its own group. We will also see how group membership is literally a matter of incorporation, of making the body part and parcel of group practices and events.

## Body 1 and body 2

In the Western world, we are familiar with the perspective of the body as an object of the natural sciences, medicine, and biology. It is, as Leo Vroman has said, “a soft machine, a flexible little column, with holes full of tender tiny threads and tubes” (1957: 15; our translation). We could technically refer to it as a “microfunctional body,” but for the sake of brevity we will use the term “body 1.” Because the focus is on the working of the body at the molecular level it is called “micro.” And because the molecular processes regulate the effective operations and behaviors, it is called “functional.” Examples abound, including keeping the body temperature at 37°C, or the regulation of all kinds of hormonal balances. At the level of the brain and its myriad of neurons we encounter an electrochemical machine without compare, as for instance Antonio Damasio (2010) has pointed out. Damasio also argues how the body is part of our being able to operate consciously in the world. This does not imply, however, that we are consciously aware of how our body operates at this microfunctional level. When crossing a street, for example, the body seems to do all the work in terms of estimating how much time a car will take to reach us; eyes, brains, and body movement take care of the proper perception and the subsequent action.

On the other hand, the body that we *are*, as our manifestation in the world, we will henceforth refer to as the “macro-operational body,” or “body 2.” It results of course from the workings that we examined above, in the body 1 perspective, but it does not only get its appearance from there. Admittedly, the color of our skin, the texture of our hair, and our height are correlated to our body’s microfunctional organization, as are all sorts of assets that influence our features. But our body’s elegance, gait, expression, and presentation stem as much from how this body operates in the social world at large.

Therefore, we say “macro” because everyone can see with the naked eye what the body does. We say “operational” because the focus is on how it acts and expresses itself in the world. It was referred to by Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1945) as *le corps sujet*, the body-subject. This expressive body 2 moves in a certain way; it is beautiful or ugly, graceful, skillful, clumsy, male, female, or something in between. It includes the body techniques and practices that an individual acquires as a member of a family, social class, occupation, and so on. Body 2 is a body that is trained and drilled. It has learned how to play soccer or American football, how to dance; it is the body of the worker, the scholar, the farmer, or the athlete. It is skillful, strong, tanned, rough, or overweight. In other words, it has

become styled in the social practices in which it participates. It has learned how to move, taste, and behave as a member of a specific group, and at the same time the now-styled behaviors of body 2 express the ways of the group.

For example, in student fraternities it is often easy to see which students originate from wealthy backgrounds or from the lower levels of society – even if they are dressed similarly. A keen observer will be able to discern the various social backgrounds from the way students move, wear their suits, hold their glass of wine or beer, talk, and so on. The typical accents and even the preferences of a social class become visible in the bodily practices of its proponents. The observer can tell whether a boy is used to wearing a suit and a tie, or whether he wears a suit only on special occasions. To be sure, in a globalizing world all sorts of expressive styles have come to permeate all kinds of social environments such that classic stereotyping may become less obvious, but it is still a fun experiment to scrutinize people's bodily styles in order to find patterns that reveal their group membership. Their accent is an obvious characteristic to start with. People's style of talking literally seems to become carved in their vocal chords, and is conspicuously difficult to change. Further cues for other persistent bodily patterns will follow quickly for the keen observer.

Body 2 is also the body of fashion. The cultural form of behavior that goes under the label of fashion was already characterized in the second half of the nineteenth century as being as important as religion and morality. Herbert Spencer (1861) observed that religion regulates people's spiritual aspirations and obligations, but manners and fashion regulate the more earthly forms of human traffic. Fashion is an indispensable instrument in this regulation. Body 2 is as such the expressive bearer of clothing, tattoos, piercings, hair styles, and so on, and is therefore the public manifestation of morals. Or, more generally speaking, body 2 is the bearer of meanings.

### Bodily practices

In order to gain a good psychological understanding of meaning production and dissemination, the body 2 perspective is thus highly relevant. How patterns of behavior become organized and how the body becomes accordingly attuned is not usually something that people are aware of. Yet to an observer it is as if the behavior patterns have become inscribed in the body, so to speak, as is the case with all sorts of skills. People's everyday automaticities are visible to everyone and, as we have already

stated, they often disclose the kind of milieu in which people learned their routines and skills. Because the acquisition of everyday routines like talking and walking is a matter of bodily involvement, of training and practice, it should not be surprising that the conduct that some may find typical of a certain group of people (let's say country folk) is something these people cannot entirely get rid of, no matter how intense their exposure to other styles. It is not just a matter of knowing that. It is above all a matter of bodily training and routine; laborious to acquire and perhaps even more laborious to change later in life.

However, everyday routines and skills do not merely consist of behavioral patterns that can be easily observed. They are always accompanied by less apparent emotions and feelings, tastes and beliefs. That is to say, in body 2 a preference for classical music, appreciation of a landscape, or enthusiasm for flea markets are all part of the individual's behavioral style. In the early 1980s, the sociologist Pierre Bourdieu tried to capture human agency in terms of bodily dispositions that bear the traces of social class. He was aware of a tremendous shortcoming in a sociology that turned away entirely from psychology. Sociology was in need of something like an actor without a psychic structure, in order to augment the analyses of systems and of power with something that could function as an agent. To that end, Bourdieu (1980) coined the notion of *habitus*, the expressive style and dispositions of a body that has become incarnated (literally, "in the flesh") with the typical beliefs, emotions, and habits of its social class.

Relative to the rest of the social sciences, present-day psychology is much better equipped to provide "the social" with something that firmly and unobtrusively fixes people to the way in which their lives are conducted and organized in the group to which they belong. Conceptually, the idea of body 2 is akin to the notion of *habitus* that Bourdieu put forward. However, for Bourdieu, *habitus* is a "structuring structure," which suggests that somehow it is still a force that molds and shapes the individual. We propose a more radical idea in which people, by means of their fully embodied engagement, orient themselves to others, and coordinate their behaviors with respect to those others. The styled behavioral patterns and the expressive repertoire of their own body result from this active participation. In this manner we can understand how those patterns become recognizable, fixed, rigid, and automated (see below) through practice and training. And these patterns include cognitions and feelings, as we will see in the next section. However, it is neither necessary nor desirable to suppose that there are social forces or structures that are



external to the individual, and from which the shaping energy derives: from the outset, the shaping is by definition a social affair.

## The Social Form of Feelings and Emotions

Emotions and feelings have long been seen as the main source of disturbance of the rational process. This is partly true of course. Someone who is angry or feels humiliated may react unreasonably because he is blinded by emotion. And also, as the saying goes, love is blind. What is implied in this saying is that the view of the beloved's properties can be distorted by the interests of the lover. She or he will be as positive as possible about the loved one. This view of emotion as opposed to reason changed drastically after it became clear that emotions should be distinguished from feelings. Feelings play a completely different part in people's affective life than do emotions. The difference between the two is spelled out in the work of Damasio. He makes a clear distinction between two way of being affected by important events. Each way manifests itself differently in the bodily reactions.

There are parts in the human brain that, once excited, produce an emotional state involving our entire body. The amygdalae, for instance, prepare for emotional responses; the hypothalamus, the limbic systems, and parts of the brain stem are responsible for the execution of the emotional responses. These responses are of course elicited by certain stimuli and inner drives. It seems that, in explaining how stimuli and emotional responses are related, Damasio follows William James's famous argument. At the end of the nineteenth century, he was already suggesting that we are afraid because we run away, and not vice versa. James ([1890]1950: 449–450) writes about emotions:

Our natural way of thinking about these coarser emotions [e.g., anxiety] is that the mental perception of some fact excites the mental affection called the emotion, and that this latter state of mind gives rise to the bodily expression. My theory, on the contrary, is *that the bodily changes follow directly the perception of the exciting fact, and that our feeling of the same changes as they occur IS the emotion*. Common sense says, we lose our fortune, are sorry and weep; we meet a bear, are frightened and run [. . .]. The hypothesis here to be defended says that this order of sequence is incorrect, that the one mental state is not immediately induced by the other, that the bodily manifestations must first be interposed between, and that the more rational statement is that we feel sorry because we cry, angry because we strike, afraid because we tremble [. . .]. (Emphasis in original.)



On the basis of this visual and probably also auditory stimulus of confronting the bear, there is an immediate and unconscious evaluation of the situation. Later on in psychology, the notion of appraisal was used to denote this immediate unconscious evaluation of the situation. James uses the word “perception” in this case, which is confusing, because this term is associated predominantly with seeing.

The stimulus evaluation involves a lot more than sight, of course. On the basis of later research we can now say that the entire body somehow feeds into the alert system – that is to say, humans are equipped with an emotional system that allows them to respond at once to stimuli that require immediate action. The aim of this initial response is to decide whether the stimulus is favorable or not, whether it brings pleasure or pain. That decision is emotional rather than rational or conscious: Because it is in our interest to stay alive we do not first analyze the kind of bear that is approaching us. Based on his neurological findings, Damasio seems to confirm that William James was right: First we flee, and then there is emotional feeling, in the sense that we become conscious of what has happened to us. Damasio disagrees with James that emotion and feeling can be merged. Instead he puts the phenomena in different systems, as we will explain in a moment. It is perfectly clear, however, that the emotional system contributes to staying alive – it is a life-regulating system. The chain of emotional reactions in the body escapes our conscious deliberation as well as our conscious control. Our outward and observable manifestations are immediate, too: goose bumps, a pounding heart, high respiration, a characteristic facial expression, and so on. These cannot be hidden or denied.

The neural tissue associated with the system of emotions has a counterpart in the brain. This second neural system is responsible for different responses in the organism than those just mentioned, although on the basis of the same bodily processes. Damasio and his colleagues showed that parts of the insula and the somatosensory cortex are activated when people feel pain or joy. In a couple of experiments it was further demonstrated that the actual conscious experience of an emotional state followed a different path through the brain than did the production of the emotional state itself. *Being* emotional and *feeling* the bodily responses originate in different places.

Moreover, in the very same parts of the brain that are responsible for feeling an emotion, the endings of some very special nerves can be found. These nerves inform the brain (mostly the insula) about all kinds of internal body states – such as body temperature, blood pressure, sugar levels, infections, and so on. These brain areas in the cortex, which

regulate the higher brain functions, can be conceived of as neural maps that represent internal conditions of the body. Damasio concludes that feelings are strongly associated with these representations of body states in neural “maps” in the brain. Somewhat simplified, one might say that the conditions of our body appear to us as feelings.

The point is not so much that first there are emotions, and subsequently feelings can occur. Rather, the crucial point in Damasio’s work is that there are two neurological flip sides to the affective coin, so to speak. The emotional states that a person’s body is in occur to her or him as feelings. Whereas emotions involve immediate and automatic responses of the body that regulate life processes, feelings involve our becoming aware of the corresponding bodily states. As a matter of fact, feelings are life-regulating as well. But there are separate neurological paths in the brain that are responsible for both life-regulating systems.

Damasio is even more precise on the status of feelings. As ideas about the body, they are truly mental states. Put differently, feelings are the mental content of emotions. They are, for instance, the mental state of being happy or being sad. As such, they enter the arena of the mind and are able to act upon it. It has been shown in the laboratory that ideas evoke feelings – thinking of a traumatic experience makes people sad and anxious – as well as the other way around – pleasant feelings elicit a rapid flow of thoughts. And, as most people know, unpleasant feelings may be counterbalanced by positive thoughts. The key point for a psychological analysis of culture is that there is some room for ideas and thoughts to enter the scene and to control or elaborate upon feelings. Emotions pertain to the unconscious automaticities of the body, but the experience and expression of feelings can be stylized to some extent. And, as we will argue, for this stylizing of feelings the local social group is crucial.

A feeling for . . .

Again, we start with an example: Someone wants to take a course in wine tasting. In order to master the sensory examination and evaluation of wine, the practitioner not only has to learn *how* to taste, but also *what* to taste. It takes the instructions and examples of a skilled sommelier to teach the novice how to appreciate the aromas and colors, to discriminate the four stages of wine tasting (appearance, in-glass, in-mouth, aftertaste), and how to establish the wine’s complexity and character. The apprentice learns to connect a formal terminology (woody, honeyed, round, lively, short, and so on) to the flavors that she or he learns to discern. There will be examples, instructions, and – very important – corrections from the

skilled master, such that the apprentice can try and practice until the desired routines unfold slowly. As such, wine tasting is indeed a practice that requires practice. By means of sufficient training, the novice learns to distinguish and appreciate different flavors, and she or he will probably develop a very personal taste for wine.

To that very personal taste some characteristics pertain, however. First, our body sets limits on what is tasteful. We may learn to appreciate very sweet wines, or we may instead favor wines that many others find too spicy. But nobody will learn to appreciate sour wine. Whereas any disgust from drinking wine for the very first time may be overcome, the taste of sour wine can never be tolerated. Such disgust appears to be automatically initiated by the body.

Within the range of tastes that our bodies can tolerate, there is yet another machinery that determines where our personal preferences will be located on the scale. Through training in a particular group, the taste experiences of the novice become calibrated to what the already skilled practitioners qualify as good, faulty, woody, lively, and so forth. The novice incorporates – literally – the skill of tasting wine, including the normative qualifications that already reside in this practice. Thus, for the sommelier-to-be, the qualification “woody” is not so much obtained by an objective assessment of the wine’s characteristics. Rather, the qualification “woody,” and the grasping of what that label refers to, is acquired through practicing, in which the student’s experiences become attuned to those of the experts. Although every person in the group will have a personal taste, these tastes are most likely calibrated around a relatively small group-typical interval on the entire range of possible tastes. (Contrast this with the precision tuning of an old analog radio, if you like.) The normativity that thus resides in the group is not so much propositional or formal, but is more primarily enacted and presentational.

This implies that there is a point in the learning process where the radius of formal instruction ends. It is the point beyond which the trainee has to continue practicing until she or he finally begins to really understand how to do things: “Aha! Now I think I know how to do it!” Interestingly, the more we really “know” and “understand” how to do things, the more we seem to speak in terms of body metaphors – having *Fingerspitzengefühl*, or “getting a feel for it.” Good students need to get a feeling for the subject matter, whether it is dancing or mathematics. That feeling cannot be fully instructed, as every teacher knows. It has to follow from practice, which already implies a tuning of experiences to those of the experts. In other words, a feeling for the situation is social and normative through and through.

We realize that we may now be stretching Damasio's notion of feelings in a way that he would not agree with. Nevertheless, it is our hunch that "feeling" and "feeling for" are in line with his theory. Most probably, this process wherein experiences and feelings become socially attuned or stylized can be found in all areas of social intercourse. For example, how close do we approach our conversation partners?<sup>1</sup> How long do we look one another in the eye? When do we make a joke? How do we address others? Time and again, it takes the socially attuned feeling for what is proper to make us act accordingly. Once again we conclude that the normativity resides in the skill – not in a formal proposition, description, or rule.

Of course we would not deny that normative practices may become formalized and objectified in texts or signs. One may subsequently conclude that a text, such as a "rule," informs the behaviors of individuals. Nevertheless, the crucial point remains that true and authentic mastery of the rule, or of the desired behavior, requires a feeling for the rule and the behavior. It involves practice and appropriation. There is a difference between knowing the correct steps in a particular dance and being a skilled performer of the same dance. It is impossible to really dance without having developed a feeling for the dance and the music, which only result after a considerable amount of effort. Any dance teacher will acknowledge that. But something similar is true for social interactions. Knowing what to say is not enough: It takes a feeling for the situation, for the perspective of others, for the appropriate tone in which to express things, as well as for the timing of when to express it. Even a judge following a written law code needs a feeling for the circumstances and people's relations in order to construe a professional verdict, which only results from practice and experience.

Let's now briefly return to the quote by William James and see what we have gained from relating bodily sensations – that is, feelings – to styled practices in the group. James talks about the fear that results from encountering a bear. Suppose a small group of naïve hiking tourists suddenly see a bear in the woods. They run as quickly as they can and even when they are safe they continue to panic for a while, unable to stop trembling. Now suppose an equally small group of hunters is caught by surprise by a bear, which suddenly looms up behind their backs. The hunters flee, too, but once safe their reactions are very different. They look each other in the eye, slap each other on the shoulder and tell each other how narrow their escape was. One says: "My goodness, I was afraid that it would get us!" Another says: "Wow, that was really dangerous, but we made it!" In either case, the bear is scary enough to make the two

groups run away as quickly as they can. Yet, on the basis of a similar emotional reaction, two different ways of feeling can be distinguished. The point is that the particular feelings have become styled within the group: The perception of, and dealing with, the emotional states of the individual's own body (e.g., experiencing terror and trauma versus thrills and pride) depends on the group-specific styling of the expressive body (body 2) through practices.

### The sensorium

We reanimate the classical idea of a sensorium to designate the mutually coordinated sensitivities and the calibration of the senses in the intrinsic social group. This is not meant to refer to idiosyncratic or personal sensibilities. We use it as the point of application of group-related affective tuning. In every intrinsic social group the members' sensorium is tuned to what feels awkward or feels good, to what meets the eye and what is abhorred, to what is considered common or exceptional, to what is acceptable or unacceptable. It becomes the detection instrument which enables people to have the appropriate feeling for the situation – and, as we have seen, this normativity may vary between intrinsic social groups. The term sensorium thus designates the sum total of what can be felt, which in turn is crucial for assessing properly the circumstances that one is in. People do not experience their circumstances and other people's part in it in a bodiless and abstract way. What is agreeable or appalling is primarily felt. Clean air is something one really smells; silence is something one really hears; and a respectful, loving, and caring treatment is something one really feels.

It is commonly accepted that the sensorium is open to the influence of the intrinsic social group. David Howes (2005) recognized this crucial aspect in his opening article for the exhibition catalogue of *Sense of the City*, in Montreal:

An intense new focus on the cultural life of the senses is sweeping the human sciences and crossing over into other disciplines, including architecture and urban studies. This revolution in the study of perception highlights the fact that the senses are constructed and lived differently in different societies and periods. The perceptual is cultural and political, and not simply (as psychologists and neuroscientists would have it) a matter of cognitive processes or neurological mechanisms located in the individual subject.

We fully support Howes' message that the sensorium is calibrated in the group, but this does not mean at any cost to the individual. If the wine

is sour you spit it out, no matter what the tuning of taste in the community is like. Having said that, community practices can go far in accepting – as in the case of wine – a taste that is created by a preservation measure, turning universally liked sweet grape juice into a fluid one has to learn to appreciate. The same tuning process applies to tolerating cruelty and isolation. People can go far in turning certain horrific practices into something bearable, but again not at any cost. People are universally capable of registering pain and discomfort and its opposites. A study by Naomi Eisenberger and others (2003) showed that physical pain and the pain that is caused by social exclusion are felt in the same way. Another study, by Roy Baumeister and Nathan DeWall (2006), suggests that social pain can make the sensorium numb, but not to such a degree that in the end no pain will be felt at all. There are boundaries to what people can bear. Under great pressures and horrible threats, people may tolerate very hard and dire circumstances for a while, but again, once the pressures loosen up the sensorium will register the alleviation of the circumstances and it will motivate people to act accordingly. This points to a normativity that is inherent in the way the human sensorium works; within those boundaries, the shaping practices of the intrinsic group calibrate and tune people's tastes and other experiences in group-typical ways.

## **The Intrinsic Social Group**

We have argued that obligations and commitments are not simply a verbal affair, they are practices. We have claimed that in order to understand these practices, we need to understand the relationship between the body 2 and the group. But the idea of “group” needs some further explanation. After all, not every group is a “real” group.

We have to distinguish between two kinds of groups. Some groups are formed on the basis of one or two features that an outsider assigns to their members. John Greenwood (1994) referred to these as “aggregate groups.” Other groups are formed on the basis of one or two features that the members of that group use themselves for identification, as insiders. Greenwood called these “intrinsic social groups.”

The distinction is important because, in real-life situations, we are interested in people operating under group ties that really matter: not only families, clubs, peer groups, business boards, clans, gangs, but also youngsters who gather at street corners, refugees who flock together in the safety of a new city, notables or dignitaries of a village, celebrities who gather

at opening nights, and so forth – these are all examples of intrinsic social groups.

Aggregate groups are artificially assigned groups. They are popular among social scientists because they are easily constructed on the basis of one or two criteria that are important for particular research aims or for policymaking. For example, nowadays people are taller because of nutritious food and efficient health care. Fashion business planners and designers need to know how many suits of a particular size are required. To that end people have to be classified as males and females of a particular height. Such groups of people of a particular height are good examples of aggregate groups. They are classified together by an external observer on the basis of a common feature that the “members” of the aggregate need not be aware of. Certainly, this feature does not serve as social cement for the members of that artificially created “group.” Catholics, women, and hockey players are other examples of aggregate groups. Again, the members need not have personal ties or be aware that they are part of a group. It suffices that someone else has classified them on the basis of some criterion. However, an aggregate group can develop into an intrinsic social group as soon as the members themselves use the classification criterion as a label and subsequently as a source of identity. This often happens to groups of immigrants.

An intrinsic social group is always constituted by the relationships between the members. Greenwood distinguished three identifiers of belonging to a real group: (1) agreements, (2) conventions, and (3) arrangements. In most cases these identifiers jointly determine belonging to an intrinsic social group. Although Greenwood did not explain in detail how to conceive of agreements, conventions, and arrangements (ACAs), we find this distinction particularly useful. In our book the ACAs are conceptualized as identifiers of group-belonging in relation to our overall argument on behavioral patterns.

### Belonging on the basis of agreement

A person may feel he or she belongs to a group on the basis of a rule or on the basis of an agreement about what counts as an attribution rule. For example, all people born within the confines of the kingdom of the Netherlands and whose parents possess Dutch nationality can get a Dutch passport. This will give them a national identity and some formal feeling of belonging. These feelings need not go very deep emotionally, but the possibility exists that they will become very strong, for instance when disasters occur abroad, such as an earthquake or an airplane crash involv-



ing compatriots. A soccer match involving the national team is another good example of deep-reaching feelings of belonging, on the basis of a rule-based composition of a team and its achievements. The mere agreement that an individual has met the conditions of becoming a Dutch citizen may channel the concomitant group-inclusive feelings. In this case, it is not just an aggregate group that we are dealing with, since each “member” is aware of his or her inclusion. Feelings of belonging to a group on the basis of agreements are nevertheless a rather abstract form of group membership and are by no means always significantly present in people’s everyday routines.

### Belonging on the basis of conventions

Much less abstract is group membership expressed through conventions. “Convention” denotes the tacit or unwritten “rules” that appear to guide the general behavior of the members of distinct social groups. For example, members of the higher professions tend to conventionalize their behaviors. Think here of vocational groups like physicians, lawyers, politicians, administrators, and so forth. Their behavioral patterns are often restricted by routines and the affective machinery, and thus become styled in accordance with the accepted standards of conduct. Such behavioral routines are difficult to explicate but are clearly also visible to those outside the circle of the elite vocational groups.

Conventions are particularly important in limiting a distinct set of behaviors to a specific segment of society. They safeguard the social borders of class against easy crossing and blurring of the lines. The operation of conventionalized behavior is amply illustrated in the many novels and movies about intimate relationships. Novels like Theodor Fontane’s *Effi Briest*, Leo Tolstoi’s *Anna Karenina*, D.H. Lawrence’s *Lady Chatterley’s Lover*, and Gustav Flaubert’s *Madame Bovary* are famous examples of the conventionalizing of segmented social behavior. *Pygmalion* and the movie *Titanic*, too, are love stories about learning or breaching conventions that are involved in gaining access to the upper strata of society. In all of these examples, expressive requirements, disciplinary practices, and impression management are conspicuously present. The proper way to walk, dine, and dance, to court and seduce, all involve the meticulous training of body 2. The proper styling and the continuous correction of the required behaviors if the standards aren’t met feels natural to youngsters born into this specific class, but are hard to learn for people from other social backgrounds who have totally different behavioral patterns and practices.



Conventions therefore bring with them moral pressure, since they can easily be violated. If someone runs counter to the conventions of the group – for instance, by telling a joke at the wrong moment or even simply by wrongly handling a glass of champagne – this may be met with contempt. The indignation does not so much result from breaking explicit rules and agreements, but rather from barely noticeable deviations from the behavioral routines and feelings that have become attuned within that particular group of people.

Conventions can be altered and manipulated less easily than agreements, because they are less explicit, less tangible, and show up only in practices. We need to experience the conventions from within, so to speak, by living according to them. Only in showing mastery of these practices do we exclusively demonstrate that we belong to this or that distinct group. Group membership on the basis of conventions is therefore less transparent than is membership based on rules or agreements alone – that is to say, it is difficult to discern what is crucial for the behavior to be appropriate. It involves the embodied skills of picking up and displaying with ease and flair what is “right” and “done,” even if we cannot precisely explain why it should be this way. This once again suggests an elaborated yet largely implicit training trajectory.

How difficult this is can be exemplified by pointing out what only the experts or virtuosos can do. Under given circumstances only the very skilled practitioners can deviate from what is expected without a loss of decorum. A telling example is the former Dutch queen, Beatrix, who some years ago allowed a bystander to kiss her during a tour on Queen’s Day. She broke the conventions – as did the male bystander – that safeguard her presence against intrusions from commoners. If she hadn’t allowed this kiss to happen, the man would have been handed over to the police. In a sense, the queen confirmed her ease with her royal status by allowing a quick and unexpected breach of what was expected. Only complete mastery of the art of conventional conduct allows for this in a way that doesn’t cause embarrassment.

Conventions thus make the group much more exclusive and intensely bound together than is possible on the basis of agreements alone. Membership requires feeling and expertise. It is difficult to manipulate. Even if we live up to the material standards of a particular class, for example, because we have acquired enough income to live in a wealthy house and to drive a classy car, we will remain *nouveau riche* in the eyes of others if we do not have the proper feeling and sense for the necessary conventions.

### Belonging on the basis of arrangements

Behavioral patterns and the feelings and cognitions that go with them result from the coordination of actions between people, but always in a material environment. In virtually all instances, this material environment is designed, constructed, and modified by people to fit their needs and wants. And because they grow up and adjust to their social and material environments, their behavioral patterns become structurally coupled to these environments, like a photo negative, or in the way that a foot comes to fit a shoe and vice versa.

This coupling is also the source of triggers for behavior, in the sense that the arrangement functions as a set of affordances in the life world of the actor. Designers of public places like supermarkets and airports know how they can organize pedestrian traffic (“routing”) using colors, lighting, odors, or optical effects resembling wet floors. Without having to use text or signs, the traffic can be guided in the desired direction, elegantly and, for most people, without their full awareness. In such a case, the environment is arranged both to make people feel comfortable and to evoke the desired behavior. Extrapolating this arrangement in logistics or transport to a variety of social situations requires a general idea of how a behavior is triggered and maintained by the (mostly material) layout of all kinds of arrangements. These may include clothing, household goods, group-related gadgets, the way houses are decorated and grouped together in neighborhoods, the design and use of places to hang out, and so on. Because behavioral patterns, including feelings and cognitions, are coupled with the material environment that they co-constitute and in which they fit, the arrangements are both expression of, and affordances for, group-typical behaviors. Thus, when people are used to sitting outside and in front of their houses in the summer – as is very typical in working-class neighborhoods in the Netherlands – it is likely that their behavioral patterns of meeting each other and of addressing and observing strangers also become shaped along the group-specific lines that occur within the arrangement of sharing private and public spaces in this particular way.

Most people feel comfortable within the environments they grew up in and they often recreate similar environments if they move abroad. This well-known behavior of immigrants can be observed everywhere. It is important to understand that it is not simply a lack of inspiration, or nostalgia for the old days, homesickness, or clinging to tradition; the point is that people’s behavioral routines and feelings fit best in the kind of

environment in which they were shaped in the first place. Hence, rebuilding such an environment is soothing and relaxing, both physically and emotionally.

With the term “arrangement” we refer to that very much taken-for-granted environment that people shape themselves, and that in turn helps to shape the behaviors and feelings of people, and even triggers them. It is not unlike water and fish: The fish do not realize the water is there because it is everywhere, unconditionally, but an observer can tell that it channels the behaviors of the fish to an important extent. Of course, humans can shape their material environment to express preferences, status, or personal relations, to name but a few. A good example of this is in the classroom, where time and again we have observed that pupils aged 12–13 years old reproduce their social relationships when they are free to choose where to sit in an empty classroom. The most popular and dominant children are the first to sit down. Interestingly, they tend to choose the center of the setting. The averagely popular pupils occupy the next “ring,” oriented toward the center. Unpopular or alternative students sit down on the periphery, a bit more distant from the second ring. In the absence of any instruction, this pattern recurs almost every time. The point is that the physical setting becomes arranged, unintentionally, according to the social relationships that the researchers had already observed in (but not communicated to) the class.

Other examples of arrangements abound. The office of a former chief of police in a large Dutch city had an elevated desk in the far corner of a large room, facing the door. Any visitor, usually a subordinate, had to fight her or his way to the chief, obstructed by filing cabinets, tables, and paperwork. Literally, the power distance had become objectified in the chief’s room. Many directors’ rooms show similar intimidating arrangements, just as general practitioners’ examination rooms used to do. The fact that this has changed in recent times – in that the physician does not necessarily wear a white jacket anymore and no longer has a stethoscope around his or her neck – testifies to the increased awareness that such arrangements are not conducive to relaxed communication. (We do not ignore the fact that professional sign-markers may reassure people that they are in capable hands; we point rather to intimidating aspects of professionals’ use of such markers.)

Just as a river both shapes the banks and is guided by those very banks, people’s routines – including feelings and cognitions – are structurally coupled to the arrangements in which people find themselves embedded. Arrangements and their behavioral counterparts tend to become noticeable when people move to other places. In a strange social environment

people are often clumsy, which expresses itself in ungainly movements and in feelings of discomfort. The previously learned and taken-for-granted behavioral routines and feelings do not fit the new situation, either physically or socially. As a consequence, the new arrangements do not elicit the proper behaviors and feelings. This becomes particularly manifest in what we call “cultural arrests,” clinging to our way of life even though the circumstances have changed drastically. The behavior that was practiced and learned in our old circumstances, arranged in accordance with the existing practices, is no longer applicable to the new situation with new arrangements. In other words, the old behavioral patterns do not fit. Moreover, the new arrangements can trigger the wrong behavior in the sense that old routines and feelings are inappropriate under the current circumstances. Part of the problem is of course that the old behavioral patterns were acquired through long and laborious training and correction of body 2. And, as many people know, old habits are particularly hard to change.

One more important aspect needs to be mentioned here. Generally, arrangements are an asset in transferring a particular way of life to the younger generation. For example, when youngsters in a rural environment are offered jobs that are easily accessible and when this interferes with further schooling, this confirms the adolescents’ wish to earn money at a young age and to avoid ongoing education. When local recreational activities are added to this (sideshows, fairgrounds, beer festivals, annual markets, and so on), at which courtship at a very young age is easily facilitated, this leads to arrangements that keep youngsters firmly fixed in the behavior patterns that their parents are used to by tradition.

Of course the distinction between agreements, conventions, and arrangements is in theory an analytical distinction. In practice ACAs operate in concert to trigger behavioral patterns and organize group belonging. In our opinion, however, it is very useful to try to ferret out the distinct contributions of ACAs.

Group membership that involves bodily attunement or fit to the arrangements is the most powerful way of being involved in an intrinsically social group. There is room for improvisation, but there is little deliberation or conscious choice – as is the case when an agreement is the basis. Arrangements and conventions can come into play in the case of agreements as well – for example, when ethnic enclaves are established abroad, or exclusive clubs, or special interest groups. In such cases, conventions and arrangements can increase the agreed-upon group identification by requiring special conventional practices in dress, manners, and general comportment. They are tailored to people’s routines, feelings, and cognitions, such

that the familiar behaviors occur as a matter of course. To fully understand how behavioral patterns become rigid and compelling to group members, we therefore have to include the physical and social arrangements in which people operate in their daily situation. This is because these arrangements stage and channel the practicing of group-typical behavioral patterns such that these become routine, and at the same time self-evident and virtually inescapable.

### Articulation and involvement

Agreements, conventions, and arrangements can be plotted on two dimensions. One can be called “articulation,” meaning the degree in which agreements, conventions, and arrangements are made explicit. The other we call “involvement” and it refers to the degree in which the agreements, conventions, and arrangements involve people’s experiences.

Articulation implies the possibility of regulation. Once there is a clear awareness of an agreement or a rule, which marks a person’s membership of a group or even a nation, that membership is relatively explicit and formal. It can be regulated in the sense that necessary things can be done in order to activate or deactivate it. It may involve a rational stance, but the agreement can also be of a totally different nature, as we have seen before, when historical events were invoked as an agreed incident in the nation’s past to be used for group membership by Moroccan boys. Or, to use another example, in connection with health risks for people who suffer from obesity, the awareness that they fit the criteria (which initially merely mark an aggregate group) can create an intrinsic social group – that is, the mere awareness of an agreed-upon criterion can result in attempts to bring these people together so that they can help each other in combating their eating disorder. A clear and explicit “rule” may evoke feelings of inclusion even though our everyday routines will not bear the pervasive signs of that particular group.

The fact that articulation is tied to a simpler regulation may suggest that it is easy to turn group inclusion and exclusion into a clear policy. This would indeed be the case if belonging were merely a matter of agreement. However, conventions and arrangements are crucial as well.

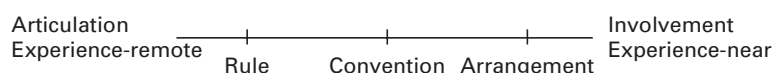


Figure 3.1 Articulation and involvement.

Conventions are less articulate or explicit than agreements. To count ourselves as part of a group on the basis of conventions requires a feeling for, and mastery of, those conventions. And this requires extensive training and repeated practice, as we have seen, including correction by an expert. But precisely because of this process of appropriation, or enactment, conventions become routine and self-evident. Instead of formal instruction, they demand skillful performance (of body 2, if you like). As identifiers of group membership, conventions are therefore much more difficult to handle or change than agreements. Whoever masters the conventions will experience belonging to a group of similarly skilled performers, to which his or her own behaviors, feelings, and cognitions have become attuned. Consequently, feelings of belonging and inclusion are already much more authentic and involve people more than does inclusion on the basis of agreement alone.

Because the arrangements in which behavioral patterns are performed are taken for granted, it is difficult to articulate them and even more difficult to change them. Relative to agreements and conventions, arrangements are concrete and they often involve people very deeply. They are extremely experience-near in people's everyday routines. This does not imply that the members of the group are consciously aware of the way things are arranged in their living environment, let alone that they consciously undergo the triggering of the behavioral patterns involved. It takes a trained eye to notice how everything is arranged and how it keeps people in place.

Thus, the dimensions of articulation and involvement are inversely related. The more articulate, the less involving; the more involving, the less articulate. Agreements and arrangements occupy both ends of the dimensions; conventional behavior can be found somewhere in between. Yet their distinction is only analytical (Figure 3.1).

### Group without force

One of the risks of conceptualizing group belonging and its identifiers is that it may lead to the notion of "groupthink" – that is to say, it may lead to wrong assumptions about group pressure. Groupthink is typically seen as uncritical acceptance by all group members of what is deemed the right course of action for everybody in the group. It is often held to be a form of pressure that exists as a force of its own. However, as we have emphasized in our argument, culture has no force of its own, nor has the group. They exert no influence *sui generis*. We introduced "the group" as the mere locus of practices and of the patterning of behaviors

that result from them. Yet, this patterning and the practices that go with it are part and parcel of the lives of individual group members who together constitute a discernable niche; a place where involvement, commitment, and the appropriation of the body take place.<sup>2</sup> We call such a niche the *intrinsic social group*. An aggregate group can never be such a locus since it is invented and constructed on the basis of criteria that are attributed externally to the group under consideration. For research connected with planning and policy it may be of interest to construct certain groups using formal characteristics. This type of construction has, however, no connection with the experiences of real people in their everyday routines.

When we reconnect the notion of the intrinsic social group with our conceptual distinction between body 1 and body 2, it becomes apparent that the expressive body 2 is vital for group membership. Through ongoing mutual tuning and shaping of behavior, and through continuous practice within the community of others (i.e., the intrinsic social group), a feel for a “proper” way of doing and expressing things comes about. As we have seen, this is not simply a matter of knowing the rules. Most often, the required behavioral repertoire remains tacit and conventional. But it is normative, nevertheless, as is immediately apparent when someone’s approach, handshake, gaze, joke, and so on, is out of touch with the rest. Every skilled group member will register that something is wrong in the social intercourse, though it may be hard to explain in what ways this is so. This is precisely where socially attuned bodily dispositions and feelings are crucial to group membership and belonging. Conversely, the expressive body is a marker for the ways of the group: From its expressive, behavioral styles we can often tell in which group(s) that body was trained and raised.

### Authentication and normativity

We thus argue that the shaping of someone’s feelings is never the work of a single individual, operating in isolation. It always takes place within a community, usually such that the expression of feelings and thoughts in practices is meaningful for others.

As soon as behavior is accompanied by emotions and feelings (recall that according to Damasio emotion and feeling cannot be separated, although they are distinct), an announcement is not just an announcement, and a gesture is not just a gesture. When someone is sad, angry, or anxious something happens to that person but also to the people around him or her. Those other people will register the disappointment or anger



that has a meaning in the context of the relationship between the subject and the other people present. Disappointment, for example, may stem from a miscommunication and it may be a direct expression of annoyance about this. The disappointment of the one communicating partner thus expresses meaningfully to the other that something has gone wrong in their relationship. The vicinity of others is therefore crucial for feelings to arise. The disappointment does not simply rise to the surface as an expression having first been present deep within the person's body. Just as ideas and thoughts in all their richness cannot be found in the physiology of the body (body 1), so feelings cannot be understood as merely bodily reactions and operations. Both thoughts and feelings result from mutually attuned interactions with other group members.

Likewise, grief isn't grief because some internal bodily disposition is labeled that way. Grief exists by virtue of the fact that within the community of skilled practitioners some things have been marked as unbearable. Grief and sadness demonstrate clearly to everyone that some events have had a strong and depressing impact. Moreover, the expression is again meaningful and normative. The skilled community members will immediately assess whether a widow weeps about her deceased husband because she was deeply in love with him, or because she wants to avoid the impression that she was only in it for the money. She cannot hide the true nature of her sorrow, unless she is a very skilled actress. This happens on the basis of attuned similar experiences in the group regarding sadness, fear, humiliation, suffering, and so on. Emotions endowed with the physiological markers of body 1 leave no room for ambiguity about what has happened to someone. The expressive form of feeling of body 2 signifies to the community that what occupies this person is really something important and true (or is not, as when the display of grief is at odds with what is expected by others around). Therefore, emotions, and especially feelings, create meanings with their own characteristic impact.

We suggest that the way emotions and feelings function in human relationships is actually not very different from how thoughts and ideas function. As ideations (see Damasio), feelings can reveal even more clearly what our position is in a particular situation and in relation to others around us. The social form of feeling therefore involves people in the group in a total and much more powerful way than would have been possible on the basis of ideas and formal arguments alone. For this reason, emotions and feelings are crucial for the creation and maintenance of normativity. People first and foremost feel what is appropriate and what is considered the normal way of doing things. The proper expression of feelings reveals and also reinforces the membership of a particular group:



Too much weeping at a funeral would make you the odd one out in the Netherlands; too little would do so in Italy.

To conclude, emotions and feelings deeply involve people in the social network that they form together. They empower meaningful practices that have normative impact. Feelings themselves become trained and shaped along the behavioral patterns in the group; in engaging properly in the dominant practices, we learn what to feel. And precisely because our very own feelings are involved in this way, the behavioral patterns in the group are experienced as personal, authentic, and significant. Since normative practices in this sense have a nonpropositional skill character, it is very difficult, if not impossible, for those involved to make explicit exactly how this skillful group membership is accomplished. We are not claiming that people's self-reported attitudes and accounts are altogether irrelevant in understanding why we consider ourselves to be part of a particular group. Yet, the nonpropositional tuning of experiences that thoroughly secure an individual's existence in his or her social environment, holds the key to a deeper understanding of how people manage to fit in seemingly effortlessly. It may also help us to understand how our fitting in is attuned to another part of the behavioral range than that of individuals in other groups; or it may help us to understand how successful we are in switching between groups. However counterintuitive it may seem, then, we have to consider studying feelings, however private, in terms of attuned social practices.

Importantly, they are trainable to an extent. In some sense, Damasio also initiates this line of argument throughout his writings (e.g., 2003, 2010) when he injects feelings into the domain of mental phenomena. Moreover, he speculates about the relationship between feelings and the social domain. Feelings help us to understand and use social conventions, Damasio writes. These social conventions are necessary for successful navigation in our very complex social worlds. We argue, however, that feelings encompass much more than being the prerequisites for smooth social practices. Feelings are social practices in themselves. Properly stylized, they ensure that we fit in, while at the same time they express to us and to others who we authentically are. Something real is at stake. However, emotions and feelings are also responsible for resistance and tenacity. This we will examine next.

## **The Automaticity of Everyday Life**

The received view in psychology is that people are either motivated by something inside them or by forces from outside. Motivation has been

divided into intrinsic (motivation from within) and extrinsic (motivation from outside) pressures. Both Sigmund Freud and Burrhus Skinner emphasized that our behavior is not consciously regulated but controlled by forces that we are not immediately aware of, whether from the well-known Freudian unconscious or from our reinforcement history, as the behaviorists would have it. Instead of identifying under what circumstances and on what domains these unconscious pressures operate, both psychoanalysis and behaviorism have radicalized their positions in the sense that Freud made the unconscious into a force of its own and Skinner removed consciousness entirely from the scientific discourse.

Automaticity research has recently revealed, however, that motivation is not a matter of unconscious-irrational forces, as opposed to rational ones or mere reinforcements. The “cognitive unconscious,” as developed in cognitive psychology, emphasizes something entirely different. Experiments by John Bargh and his team over the past 20 years have shown that perceiving, striving for something, emotions, feelings, moods, and so on, are all influenced by automatic routines. Bargh has turned this automaticity in everyday life into one of the important production principles of behavioral patterns as well as cognitive functioning. The main instrument in the experiments is the technique of priming, and it works as follows. Some participants were confronted unobtrusively with (that is, they had to read carefully in a piece of text) words like “professor,” “intelligent,” “secretary,” “modest,” “grandma,” “old,” “Olympic champion,” “rapid,” and so on. The experimenters observed that, when completing a problem-solving task or playing the game Trivial Pursuit, following the priming condition, the subjects who were tacitly primed with “professor” or “intelligent” did significantly better than those primed with, for instance, “secretary.” Likewise, subjects who had been subtly primed with the word “grandma” were significantly slower at walking down a path than were those who had been primed with the word “champion.” Evidently, some sort of mental or behavioral program had been triggered in subjects and carried out automatically. This remarkable phenomenon was reproduced time and again. And as it turned out, not only cognitions and motor programs could be primed, but feelings as well.

Bargh’s claim is therefore that most of our everyday behaviors are automated, routine, not – or, rather, no longer – consciously initiated. The priming experiments testified to the fact that “nonconscious mental systems perform the lion’s share of the self-regulatory burden, beneficently keeping the individual grounded in his or her current environment” (Bargh and Chartrand 1999: 463). In daily life, this may seem practical because conscious perception and thought often require so many intellectual

resources that a constant conscious control and evaluation of our actions would be too great a burden for us to survive. Through training, coordinations and choices eventually become routines, enabling us to carry out complex sequences that we are hardly aware of. Routines enable us to save time and therefore carry out parallel activities simultaneously. Driving a car, riding a bike, but also reacting to a stranger who has unfamiliar looks are obvious examples of such automaticities.

Bargh's conclusions about his automaticity research also reveal that motivational processes (e.g., carrying out a task as a pro or an amateur) can become automated. These are important conclusions for the psychological analysis of culture that we intend to implement throughout this book. It implies that the training and practice of our daily behaviors, in concordance with the practices of others – as is the case in the learning of skills monitored by the expert – extrapolates to motivation, preferences, feelings, tastes, and cognitions to such an extent that these are also immediately present and are often carried out automatically. They are as much group- and expert-bound as driving a car or riding a bike, and in consequence they are invested with the same kind of persistence that characterizes these activities. They are often as inevitable (except through a new and laborious trajectory of training) as reading a short sentence. It is virtually impossible for people who know how to read *not* to read a short line of text. This helps us to understand even better why group-typical behavioral patterns, once acquired, are so difficult to change, even at will. Or, to paraphrase Robert Zajonc (1980), it helps us better understand why indeed “preferences need no inferences.”

## A Psychological Perspective on Culture

In refuting culture as a force, as an external structure, and as an explanatory device, we have now arrived at the point where we can debunk the troublesome concept by means of the analytical tools we have collected in our kit. We started out with an emphasis on the styling of behavior and experience. To the experienced observer, this styling manifests itself as patterns of behavior. What is particularly important here is the incorporation; in other words, the embodied involvement in group-related practices. These practices need to be trained, which involves not just verbal instruction and explanation but foremost each person's commitment amid skilled others who provide the training opportunities, offer examples, make corrections, and ensure motivation. In this way, the pat-

terned behaviors, thoughts, and feelings become to a great extent immediately available and automatic. As such, patterned behaviors express people's lived and authentic ways of being, in sync with (and similar to) the authentic ways of being of others in the group. Their automatic, authentic, and lived character makes daily practices particularly hard to correct. Moreover, the patterning of behaviors, thoughts, and feelings involves bodily practices that are normative and compelling: Every group member will experience what is correct or incorrect from within, as if the impetus to act in concordance with the other group members' requirements has always been there. As such, we appear to end up with the paradox of culture: Behaviors, thoughts, and feeling may appear to be most individually and authentically ours, yet we can show them to be intrinsically social and in important respects very much like those of the group members.

Of course, there are many examples of behaviors that are formed in isolated circumstances with no group present. Think of traumas, mental disorders, or a rich fantasy life. But that is not what this book is about. It is about behaviors and feelings that involve the members of the intrinsic social group of which the main identifiers like agreements, conventions, and arrangements are the core constituents. The patterning of behavior always involves that which goes on *between* people, and not just *inside* them; notwithstanding the fact that the individual's particular biology is indispensable. The core business of a psychological analysis of culture, therefore, is to deploy the toolkit provided in this chapter and to understand how people mutually coordinate their behaviors in characteristic, persistent, normative, and authentic ways.

## Notes

- 1 This phenomenon is known as "proxemics," a term coined by Edward T. Hall (1966). Proxemics is the study of how people's use of space is modified by cultural practices. Across cultures, Hall discerned different sets of measurable distances between people as they interact.
- 2 That brain development requires group involvement is now common knowledge. Popularized neurological research into puberty and early and late adolescence continues to emphasize that the brain system is highly pliable, that it continues to grow and differentiate even beyond the age of 25, and that it is continuously reorganized on the basis of experiences during our lives. In that sense, the *corps objet* in the perspective of body 1 also becomes shaped as part and parcel of the intrinsic social group.

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# Part Two

## Sex, Status, Age, Ethnicity, and Faith

In Part Two we use our analytical perspectives on behavioral coordination, feeling, the intrinsic social group, ACAs, normativity, the socially tuned sensorium, and automaticities to analyze behavioral patterns in five domains that, in our view, are found in every modern society. On all these domains, citizens have to find behavioral solutions, so to speak, to secure a smooth and efficient social exchange. Wherever people from different societies meet, but also among subgroups within a society, tensions and problems tend to occur on one or more of these fields.

In Chapter 4 we turn to the male–female relationships in modern societies. First we present a brief history of the gender debate since the 1960s. Subsequently we deal with the worldwide phenomenon of male dominance and the neglect of female potential. The behavioral patterning of masculinity and male dominance in the areas of sex, intimacy (or what men think intimacy is), and power is still omnipresent worldwide, as we try to show, and it still prolongs a situation in which a female say in these matters is very often *publicly* ignored. It is important to understand that this doesn't happen only in the countries of Islam, as some Westerners like to argue.

Chapter 5 addresses the tensions between people in the lower and upper strata of modern society. Status and wealth have always been areas of tension and class conflict. Solutions to the problem of the distribution of status and wealth have inspired socialist utopias that in fact turned out

to be “dystopias” of the worst sort. In North European countries, for instance, an increasing number of people at the bottom of society (the so-called “underclass”), but also in the strata that profited from increasing prosperity, display resentment that is more publicly visible than ever, and that can easily be exploited for populist purposes and elite-bashing, thereby widening the gap between the different social strata. In this chapter we also go deeper into the fabrication of bodily practices and bodily comportment that are typical of some social classes, including the underclass. Borrowing the notion of “habitus” from Pierre Bourdieu, we bring his idea to bear on a psychological understanding of how class relations are reproduced time and again, up to the finest details of class-bound bodily practices.

In Chapter 6 we deal with youngsters in relation to the world of the adults. Every society has to solve the problem of incorporating its young members into the fabric of social life. Incorporation is meant literally here, since it involves not just mentality but foremost the styling of the body and the acquisition of bodily practices. The young have to be brought up diligently, under optimal conditions. However, a niche in which to stimulate their capacities can only be properly arranged if motivation, in conjunction with optimal love and care, is supported by group-bound behavioral patterns, more broadly facilitated than in the nuclear family alone. In the upbringing of youngsters the crucial phenomenon of talent, which in the received view is generally heralded as a crucial and preeminently individual feature, will be presented as an embedded, group-bound phenomenon as well.

In Chapter 7 we address strangers, or newcomers, versus people who were born in or already live in a country or area. This is often an arena of tension and misunderstanding between people, particularly when the newcomers originate from rural areas (as was usually the case with the poor “guest workers” who came to North Europe in the 1960s, from countries around the Mediterranean like Morocco and Turkey). In most North European nations, politicians have publicly declared the complete failure of the multicultural project, which held that immigrants could integrate while also keeping their own culture and identity. In contradistinction to this position taken by some European leaders and their followers, we ask what can be done to maintain the possibility of a shared future for both residents and newcomers. We will search for an answer, arguing that instead of focusing on entire cultures and their alleged characteristics as a whole, the focus of problems and opportunities should always be on the members of distinct local subgroups, whose behavioral repertoire originated in circumstances that no longer apply in their new



local environment. They learned what to do naturally in situations that are often very different from their current circumstances. Furthermore, crucial for proper communication is a psychologically informed understanding of people's affective reactions to other people who do not behave in the way one would expect.

Finally, we devote Chapter 8 to religious belief and faith as psychological, man-made phenomena. Also in modern societies, most people seem to believe in something larger than themselves. We claim that we cannot do away with belief in a generic sense. It is an existential human phenomenon without which very little reliable exchange in whatever area of conduct would be possible. We consider religious belief to be a subset of this believing in a general sense. In religion, however, are behavioral patterns that often manifest themselves as a serious threat to non-believers or believers of a different kind. Such threats generally involve some form of moralism that puts one group of people, mostly men, above another. The prime focus is again on the workings of the affective system in control of others. Also benevolent aspects of religion, such as moral elevation, consolation, and its possibility to alleviate the human condition, are again interventions of human groups, we will argue. They serve important functions, to be sure, of which we address several. Religion as the source of strong identities lies at the origin of some deep misunderstandings in many societies. Understanding them, and perhaps in the end overcoming them, requires at least a calling into question of blind faith in psychological terms. Yet, the behavioral patterning along religious ideas and practices can also provide human beings with an ultimate destiny and a remarkably powerful motivation to aim for the best they have to offer. As such, we consider religious faith, when it occurs, to be as fundamental as the other domains of Part Two.

# Sex

## *The Shaping of Sex and Gender*

In the 1950s John Money introduced the notions of gender and gender role. He didn't know what it would unleash. Gender became a new topic of controversy, particularly in relation to the question how much of it is hardwired in us and part of the male and female nature and how much can be changed *ad libitum* under the right circumstances. This binary question was ill-posed, as will become clear later on, but it created a battlefield of ideology and a backlash in the sex debate. Gender benders tried to prove that anything was possible. "Hetero" and "homo" were unnecessary oppositions in a world in which everybody was believed to start out as "bi." Even risky medical treatment with respect to changing sex thrived due to the idea that gender was fluid.

In English, the notion of sex refers both to something sexual and to the fact that one is male or female. That double connotation is confusing. Therefore, the notion of gender became commonplace. It is a notion from linguistics, meaning the gender of a word. It came to refer to the feeling of being male or female. The notion was necessary because the biological sex comprises all kinds of varieties, which diverge from what generally can be called male or female. Hermaphrodites, transsexuality, or boys in the body of a girl or girls in the body of a boy, abnormalities on the various chromosomes that determine sex: all call for a new vocabulary to express the way boys and girls who do not feel the standard sex feelings

and cannot be classified properly in the dual system, do experience themselves sexually. Gender role and gender identity became notions in which the gamut of sexual feelings and practices could be expressed.

The heyday of Money's work with gender varieties and sexual in-between forms occurred in a time in which social experiments with sexual behavior and sexual feelings were at their peak. Those were the days of flower power marked by the famous slogan of the 1960s: "Make love, not war." Sexual morals were freed from the trammels of religious prejudice and joyful experiments replaced the lasting bonds of marriage. There was ample space to experiment with sexual preferences, lust, and the free choice of mates from one's own or the opposite sex. The contraceptive pill had just been invented and the horrific disease that later on spoiled everything was still hidden in the African forest. The emancipation movement of gays and women rose up to an almost "sexutopian" frenzy. Money's optimism was met with enthusiasm and provided welcome scientific support for this general willingness to experiment. After all, what could be more stimulating than scientifically proved openness to the varieties of nature? However, his optimism has been proved to be false.

In cases of sexual ambiguity it is wise to think about what exactly it is that makes someone male or female. In that context it seems harmless to try out a few possibilities in providing a suitable sexual identity. Money, however, went much further than that. How far became clear after an accident in a hospital in Baltimore. It began with a mistake on the operation table. In performing a routine circumcision for hygienic reasons, which was common throughout the United States, one of the doctors made a misdirected cut. The victim's penis was severely damaged; it could not be saved. Money suggested turning this boy into a girl. Later hormone treatment should make the transformation complete. The boy's parents took the advice seriously and gave their consent to perform all possible processes necessary for this gender conversion, operational and hormonal, throughout the boy's youth. It seemed to work out well, but during puberty and early adolescence the boy's pre-structured brain and body started to trigger his original masculine tendencies. The boy's body played up in a psychologically very painful and physically very confronting manner. His gait and preferences became clearly boyish.

## Sexutopia No Go

In retrospect, the exciting time of experiments and explorations was also the time in which something rather unexpected was discovered: in all these

new forms, old patterns and restrictions came into play again. Getting rid of these in just one emancipatory sweep proved harder than expected. Although it was allowed at that time in Sweden and in the Netherlands to have sexual relations with children of age 12 and upward, it became clear that these children could easily become the victim of adults' desire in a confrontation with sexual forms of feeling that were not tailored to the children's own experience and affective needs. To object to children's sexual play among each other was not possible at that time, but to presuppose that they would enjoy sexual intercourse as adults do proved a bridge too far.

Although in the Netherlands the law initially backed up the leniency of the era in one way or another, it gradually dawned on people that sexual freedom without an age limit created an awful lot of suffering. In the initial proposal in 1984 by a committee under the direction of Alfred Melai, professor of criminal justice at the University of Leiden, pornography was to be completely free, even child pornography. Sex under the age of 12 would be liable to punishment but above that age it would be permitted if the child's consent could be proven. These proposals were not all adopted by Parliament, however. The 1984 law prohibited child photography in sexual poses. This type of visualization involved the use of force in almost every case, which was the decisive reason not to follow the committee's advice. Under the new law, voluntary sex between the age of 12 and 16 was not punishable; only forced sex with these youngsters was prohibited.

Early in the new millennium, however, increasing evidence of the negative impact of sex at an early age led to a change in the laws and regulations pertaining to sexual behavior. Public opinion was also influenced by views in which the male outlook on sex from the 1960s was criticized as being female-unfriendly and dominating. It took the Feminist Movement and a few sex scandals involving murderous men and abducted young girls in order to change the law again, and to create acute awareness of the problematic situation around the sexual desires of human beings. In 2002, the age of consent went up to 16 in all cases, and profiting from prostitution by an unregistered third party was made illegal. This was intended to prevent human trafficking of women, particularly from the poorer regions of Europe. The general condemnation of child pornography, followed by stricter laws about possessing it, did not prevent a gross violation of these laws in some clearly pathological cases. Those cases laid bare a huge international network of consumers and producers of child pornography, particularly since the Internet became a prime source of production and trade. There is no question about the horrific nature

of child abuse, but a glance at the international situation quickly reveals that not all countries have the same legal standards.

We relate this history about the role of the Dutch Penal Code with respect to sexual behavior because it shows how difficult it is to shape sexual behavior in a way that does no harm to young people and women. Since Money's work, feelings and sentiments regarding sex have been changing continuously. Benign and decent behavioral patterning of sex, in which the perspective of women and children is taken seriously, has not followed the peak of tolerance in the 1960s. Disappointment has replaced early optimism about sexual variety and its exploration. Some lasting effects can be traced back to this early optimism, nevertheless. Homosexuality, for example, fared reasonably well compared to its previous disavowal, although public acceptance has remained restricted mainly to the Western world. But even here we have to be careful. Loving and caressing boys in the streets, and girls holding hands and kissing each other is still met with some resistance, as continuous violent incidents in the Western world prove. Gays and lesbians still have a hard time if they take the same liberties as heterosexual couples in public life.

The idea that everyone is bisexual because sex is the result of the social shaping of behavior did not initiate the "sexutopia" that people dreamt of in the heyday of sexual liberation. It became clear that there are inveterate heterosexuals, which contradicts the idea that the styling and designing of orientations and preferences in the sexual domain are unproblematic. Moreover, among women a sharper consciousness arose that the male shaping of sexual behavior was so conspicuously present that it tended to rule out female form and feeling. Women did not partake equally in the end result. Sex research revealed dissatisfaction among girls with respect to the quality of the sexual act. Women joined each other in their criticism of male clumsiness and lack of skill.<sup>1</sup>

In evolutionary psychology, there is a hypothesis that parental investment is unevenly distributed among the sexes. This would explain to an important degree why men are sexually more direct than women, and have higher sex drives, generally, than women. It is argued that men can spread their genes without limitation, whereas women have only a restricted number of chances (a few more than a dozen opportunities till menopause) to contribute their share to producing offspring. Sexual selection therefore fosters female behaviors in which affective hesitation, proof of the mate's quality, and reluctance to comply with the male's preferences, prevail above simply sharing the male's lust.

So much for biology, but if we look at some other aspects it becomes clear that women are less likely to experiment. Does it lead to sexual

refinement and skill on the part of men? Time and again women stress their own inexperience, but also the lack of a skillful and considerate approach by most men. To enter the female body is a gesture that requires tact and competence. It has an aggressive side that in some cases is explicitly desired, so that women may experience a lack of technique which for quite a few men goes together with an all too heated approach. Furthermore, the risk of pregnancy is never far away. In the best cases, if the girl gets a chance to express her wishes, her desire is satisfied; in the worst case there is an overshadowing, unpleasant pain. Sexual behavior has been risky throughout history. Modern times are no exception, even though many precautions can be taken to avoid serious risks. The body, however, is never an abstract, automatic lust machine. The sensitive, perceptive, and styled body 2 that we encountered earlier is involved, and it is always very concrete. It is male or female in the first place. It is beautiful or ugly, clumsy or graceful, it repels or attracts, it is sexually skilled or awkward. This will remain an important assertion throughout this chapter.

From the 1960s onward, it became abundantly clear that for women the Western liberal wind around sexuality was not a gentle breeze and it did not bring the sexutopia expected by many. It was instead a stormy period and in hindsight one even wonders whether it heralded a real liberation. Once freed from strict morals, sex did not become less risky. On the contrary; technical advances in birth control techniques did not stop the risks involved. Contagious diseases were as endemic as before and AIDS became a new risk. All in all, a heavy load was put on the shoulders of women because they needed to be available for the joys of recreational sex in the first place. The burden of pregnancy and women's prime role in households remained unchanged. To draw men into a caring role that was structurally anchored in society and smoothly integrated in the way in which work is shared between the sexes proved a real hard nut to crack. Persistent behavioral patterns showed up here too, fixed as they were in all sorts of privileges for men. This asymmetry and dominance did not change along with the less restrictive morals.

## **Asymmetry and Dominance**

There is more to the relationship between men and women than just laborious sex. Since more women have entered the workforce, for instance at universities or in business, research has focused increasingly on the persistent behavioral patterns of asymmetry and dominance. The initial

optimism that co-evolved with the perspective that all behavior could be shaped at will, even in the sexual domain, received a severe blow from evidence showing that even advanced industrial societies had to introduce quotas in order to get women promoted to senior positions. To show how much of an enigma this is, we turn to Mediterranean countries which proudly announce that they have organized the participation of women much better than the northern part of Europe. Indeed, surprisingly, countries like Morocco and Turkey, which are generally considered to have women-unfriendly regulations, have a higher percentage of women in senior positions in universities and in big firms. This happy feat is repeated in many books on woman's liberation. Yet, on closer inspection, this phenomenon evaporates a little if one looks at what really puts women in those positions. It is again the age-old and persistent pattern of the sexual division of labor that does the trick.

When he worked at the Boğaziçi University of Istanbul, one of the authors noticed that women were allowed to be absent from staff meetings or to go home early, because the men preferred the women to do their duty at home. It was not so much a modernization of male-female relationships in firms or at universities, but rather male support for the existing divisions of labor in the household that proved responsible for this arrangement. Just like everywhere else, men in Turkey and Morocco generally want their women to take on the responsibility for looking after the house, even if that involves some lenience with respect to their duties at the university or in business. The high figures of women in the workforce are therefore mediated by traditional patterns in the sexual division of labor. In fact, time and again this turns out to be a particularly persistent pattern: men do not take up traditional women's work.

### The caring role

Some scholars have asked for recognition that at some time in the past there were tribes whose women dominated the men. Not much evidence has been offered, however, to confirm this theory. There certainly have been tribes in which men and women were much more on an equal footing, like some Indians in pre-Columbian times or among the Aborigines in Australia. Yet these relationships between the sexes had no enduring influence on what in the end became the persistent pattern all over the planet. Worldwide, men are still over-represented on the boards of directors of companies. Almost everywhere they rule unrivaled in the public domain. All over the world, men carry out the minority of daily childcare, daily cooking, and daily cleaning. It is not that they do not do

the dishes, handle the vacuum cleaner, and look after their children occasionally; such tasks are satisfactorily arranged in many parts of the world. However, many men are not sufficiently focused on the implications of a caring role. On the average work floor or in the office there are no visible signs that men are equally responsible for the things to be done at home. The indispensable routines with respect to education and schooling of children, after-school clubs and hobbies, and the necessary social skills they have to develop in order to function as mature grown-ups are almost all handled by women with part-time jobs. To comply with these far-reaching requirements certainly is not yet the obvious responsibility of men. It is the women who arrange early leave from work; it is they who are concerned with the day-to-day education and development of their children, and not just with the children's grades and achievements.

We do not want to be moralistic here. But from the perspective developed in Part One we know that the embodied affective system, the embedding in the group, the enactment of automatic patterns, and the amplification of all this in ritualized practices, all contribute to the coordination of behaviors that eventually determine what is masculine and what is feminine. For instance, part-time jobs are often lower in rank, and they often do not lead to a structured career. Men find it generally reasonable to avoid this family work and leave it to the women. That men should focus on their careers and not be responsible for duties at home is widely supported. To merely hold the biological makeup accountable for this division of labor is a solution that is too easy, since it does not stimulate a rearrangement of this social setup.

### Worldwide research into dominance and asymmetry

Since 1949, and on the initiative of George Peter Murdock, the decisive features of about 300 cultures worldwide were put in a database called the Human Relations Area Files. It became possible to compare countries and communities on various cultural indicators by establishing correlations between them. The most important indicators were means of subsistence, kinship relations, and worship of gods. Systematic questioning of the members of the cultural groups constituted the bulk of the indicators' measurement. Peggy Sanday (1981) used the indicators related to creation myths, the gender of the gods, and the subsistence system. She was interested in the treatment of women, and sampled evidence from all cultures. Two societies mark the extremes in the treatment of women: on the one end the benign and women-friendly community of Semang in Malaysia,



on the other the cruel and rather women-unfriendly community of the Yanomami in Venezuela.

The Semang is a hunter-gatherer society. Its creation myth relates how the girl existed first, and then the boy emanated from a branch of the tree. The male and female principles are separated. Men have no special place in this society. Women are generally negotiators and mediators. Both sexes have the right of property and leadership on the basis of competence. Women are not excluded from participation in public life.

The Yanomami are nomads. They are distributed over about 125 settlements and their daily food consists of fruits and meat. They live in ecologically extreme circumstances, which implies that the men confront the harsh environment, while the women restrict their role to bearing children and caring for them. This division of labor is far from spontaneous. It is enforced by rough and aggressive treatment. Women are beaten up and treated almost as slaves. There is a shortage of women because circumstances are far from ideal for bringing up children. The creation myths of the Yanomami are full of cruel creatures that eat their offspring. "Blood people" creep out of the leftovers and from their legs women are created. The male and female principles are not separated but subordinated: the women are secondary and the men are very dominant. They keep the women in place using violence.

In total, 112 cultures were researched in this way by Sanday. In 18 percent of the cases the female principle was dominant; in 12 percent of the cases men and women were equal, and in about 50 percent the male principle was dominant. For the remaining 20 percent no data were available. A dominant role for men in the creation myths correlated with a hostile and unsafe environment. In such cases, fathers played no role in the upbringing of their children and there was a marked inequality in sexual matters. Also in such circumstances, the men often completely controlled fertility, deciding with whom to mate, while the women were completely subjugated.

### Arranged male dominance

At the moment of writing, a documentary is being made about human trafficking in Thailand, Cambodia, and Vietnam. In the small villages from which the girls are recruited, responsible adults encourage the girls to go out to the big city where an uncle, so they are told, will arrange a job for them. Even the monks in the village are prepared to tell these lies, for the promise of more prosperity in the city. Except for the child itself,

they all know of course that at the end of the line there is no friendly uncle, but instead a group of criminals who will ruthlessly exploit the girls. It is an arrangement, as in the case of the vendetta that we addressed in Chapter 3, in which all sorts of behaviors are coordinated among the members of the community.

The point is that the long road from the village to the brothel is not the mere consequence of masculine biology in disarray. It is not just the secretion of testosterone or the workings of brains and genes that are to blame. Rather, through particular social arrangements, behaviors and feelings of several key figures around the child become shaped to such an extent that they somehow justify the devastating fate of the girls. For instance, because the family and religious advocates are involved, it is very hard to make conscious objections. As such, social arrangements and biological inclinations (sometimes indeed inclinations in disarray) may amplify one another, such that some sort of moral disguise is created in which what is wanted fits with how it ought to be. If family, distant relatives, and even religious people work together in the trade it becomes very difficult to criticize these people and to reveal the deplorable situation in which the girls end up.

This is not unlike the descriptions of Michelle Rosaldo (1983) who tried to unravel the sentiments of headhunters. She was particularly interested to find out how the young boys could overcome their revulsion at decapitating other human beings, albeit from a rival tribe. She couched her solution in impenetrable Freudian jargon, but the thrust of her argument is very clear: One has to look at the experienced adult warriors. Using all sorts of rituals, sanctioned by the community, they draw the youngsters in and deal with their initial cowardice and revulsion. The affective life of young boys becomes channeled and streamlined. Strong emotions of disgust are slowly molded into courageous feelings of being of use in the battle against enemy tribes. Cognitions too become styled, involving the entire community and in particular the skilled and hardened adult warriors. The idea, for instance, that courage comes from “mana” to be drawn from the heads of the assaulted enemies is used as a ritual instrument. We are not implying that we now fully understand all the headhunters’ sentiments and the way in which they organize courage and warfare. Yet we emphasize once more the importance of communally-based affective structuring of body and sentiment in relation to the performance of both headhunting and human trafficking.

To illustrate male dominance in another example, the 2004 documentary film *Bride Kidnapping in Kyrgyzstan* by Petr Lom is very informative about existing practices in which women have nothing to say as far as

selecting a mate is concerned. The men and women of the lower ranks in society could not marry without paternal consent. For a long time the dowry system provided the necessary means for parents to control a successful marriage. Due to great poverty in current times, however, the age-old system of paying a dowry no longer works. Marriages have become too expensive, which disrupts the authoritarian but nevertheless reasonably organized courtship practice. As a consequence, likely brides are often abducted by men. She is put in the trunk of a car and taken to her future husband's living quarters. The men in the community do not see any objection to this new invention, and the women join in because there is no alternative.

Remarkably, after a while, when the memory of the kidnapping has faded, the husband visits her parents to apologize in order to normalize the relationship. In some cases the girl is given a chance to continue her education at school and is offered a well-protected place in the family of the husband. This state of affairs makes it difficult to reject this practice outright as a cultural arrest, because it is a way to cope with poverty. But there is also clear proof of its abusive aspects. Unless sufficient wealth is accumulated in order to give women a proper education, they do not reach an acceptance of the kidnapping. This fact points to some awareness that the forced marriage is not right if it is not balanced by some proper chances for the women to progress in life. Yet, the full situation as portrayed by Lom illustrates once more that the practice of bride kidnapping is a communal arrangement, in which the feelings of all the participants (including submission, outrage, reparation, and so on) become shaped.

Fortunately, extreme forms of asymmetry and dominance are rare. We are generally confronted with milder or at least less obvious forms. The extreme cases do teach us, however, that such organization involves communal arrangements and not just individual intentions, let alone pathology. And of course such arrangements are also present in the Western world. Peggy Sanday (1996) shows many US examples in which the men are very aggressive, whereas women mirror that part by taking on a passive role. She analyzes what has been written in sexology, what is said in courtrooms, and what is published in various pamphlets such as those by the Anti-Rape Movement. The focus lies on what women relate from their personal experience and what they think of men committing rape. What shows up in this kind of discourse is a community in which men are opposed to women as if there is a war going on between them. The dominant metaphor is one in which the sexes are at war. In addition, the idea that men feel superior to women and that women

always take on a submissive attitude is not criticized in the discourse she analyzed. Instead, biological jargon is used to amplify the leniency towards men who are seen to suffer from their drives and urges. In the same vein women are considered to be biologically unable to withhold their consent: it bubbles up from a complying nature, as it were. Driven by her hormones, she just wants to have sex too.

A still more pressing example of asymmetry and dominance in Western circles comes from scenarios in many pop videos where male rappers readily use the word “bitches,” while the women accept it as an honorary name. In such scenes, women express how common and obedient they are. It testifies to an endemic behavioral pattern in sexual matters in which men dominating submissive women appears to be the norm. Careful observation immediately reveals to what extent both asymmetry and dominance are part of actual courtship practice, scripted in community-based behavioral patterns and not just propelled by a chemical symphony in the heads of the boys and girls involved. It is generally the male who sets the standards and who determines the scene. Of course one can find examples in which women play a decisive role and seem to have the power. One could say that the general public opinion confirms this role of women. But in order to reveal it, concise observation and meticulous scrutiny of the hidden bedside interaction is badly needed.

Notwithstanding the fact that natural drives can be involved, it is important to emphasize again and again that the asymmetry and dominance are learned practices involving concrete expressive feminine and masculine bodies alike, their affective lives, their automaticities, and a community in which the senses are calibrated socially. Natural tendencies are therefore always embedded in community practices that may cultivate or to an important extent eradicate those drives. Except for a few truly pathological cases, perhaps, biology should never be an excuse for asymmetry, dominance, rape, and so forth. At the same time, there appears to be no incentive in public life for men to change their comfortable, dominant aura.

## **The Problematic Public Side of Sex**

In the Western world, sex is everywhere. It is so important that it shouts from the billboards, where scantily dressed women advertise new products. It is loudly presented on TV, associated with drinks and gadgets. Sex is included in stories and movies of all types to make them more popular. Sex from Grub Street has made highbrow literature much more exciting,

as Peter Wagner (1990) has argued. It turns up in all sorts of literature, poetry, painting, and sculpture, of course. Yet the presentation of all those sexy bodies in everyday public life rarely exemplifies what is important about sex. Sex, or rather lust, still sells and the advertising industries want us to know it.

Sexologists give us some consolation by pointing out that these sexual derailments are not related to actual practice. It is generally assumed that youngsters know how to deal with sex in a much more nuanced way. The stereotypical restrictive and seductive “Victorian” poses of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries that we know from novels and movies, are replaced by streetwise adolescents who start very early with sexual experimenting, in reality and virtually. Young boys and girls seem to practice in the virtual world of Facebook, WhatsApp, or Skype. Some danger is present online when they make a wrong choice, by filming themselves in provocative poses with a webcam or by naïvely agreeing to meeting someone in the real world they have met online. There are hazards, to be sure. Yet time and again research evidence shows that healthy self-regulation is much more prevalent than the adult world presumes. In that respect, youth are exploring the borders of their own identity, as always. Nonetheless, they have to discover almost on their own what all this early sex in virtual or actual form demands from them in terms of sensitivities and practice. They are facing sex in unexpressed forms but the question is, what is really at stake?

Michel Foucault has faced this question, with a surprising outcome. Since his trilogy on sex (1976–1984), we have been used to the idea that the public preoccupation with sex in present-day society has little to do with a general striving to escape from sexual repression. On the contrary, it is the all-permeating, willful zest for control that determines the all-pervasive presence of sex. Foucault traces this elaborate zest back to classical and up to recent times. What has always been at stake is the received heterosexual practice that throughout history has been enforced on all members of whatever community, through regulatory practices and disciplining techniques. Every single man and woman was subjugated to the construction of acceptable, commonly adopted forms of sex. The smart turn in Foucault’s argument is that this wish to control has made sex into some sort of battlefield on which the negotiation for a proper sexual identity makes the easygoing appreciation and joy of sex a risky affair. In order to avoid being labeled homosexual or lesbian, or to be branded with some sort of paraphilia, young boys and girls fear sexual experimentation with mates of either the opposite or the same sex.

Foucault’s insight is far-reaching in that it explains to what extent sex probably has never been an easily attainable everyday practice. The far-

reaching “normalization” of sex, that is to say the scientific notion of heterosexuality as the norm with which everybody has to comply, resulted in “sexuality” as the technical term for something that all people have. If another inclination of preference was felt, it was equally scientifically labeled “homosexuality.” In both notions, the rather clinical mother notion “sexuality” replaced felt emotions and feelings, including those in the concrete practices of youngsters who were still in search of a sexual identity. Everybody got “sexuality” instead. It is common to talk about “my sexuality” or somebody else’s “sexuality” while in fact it refers to a confusing and disorderly myriad of experiences in the sexual domain. Thus the label “sexuality” produced an intricate but rather abstract discourse on something clean and sterile, totally robbed of actual feelings and pleasures. Instead of bodily feelings of pleasure we got something thoroughly medical and psychological, loaded moreover with the burden of proper development. Sexuality became something to be achieved in a laborious struggle. In this manner, a heavy weight of public identity policy was also placed on the shoulders of boys and girls. But whenever a boy or a girl feels attracted in ways that differ from the received norm, there is no public discourse, education or experience to turn to. What is left is a search on the Internet, hearsay, and self-invention. And what is thus found and fabricated in most cases is far from stimulating, attentive, caring, and loving. That is apparently the price for making sex “normal,” acceptable, and controllable: a complete lack of education that touches upon the feelings and skills involved in sexual behavior.

The reader may perhaps think that this is an exaggeration. Are there not also beautiful public images of sex in movies, painting, and poetry? Well, yes, but we challenge the reader to find a movie that one can present to one’s 13-year-old daughter or son, in which the sexual act of whatever sexual orientation is beautifully and tenderly presented in total nudity in the context of a normal relationship, and not as part of a love manual or instruction film. Even in artistic movies the sexual act is most often hidden behind towels or under sheets, accompanied by laborious fumbling with clothes, skirts moved up in clumsy gestures, and with unnatural moaning and breathing in the background. Contrast this absence of presentable sex with its proliferation on pornographic sites on the Internet. This state of affairs presents a serious educational problem.

We have argued many times for the proper tuning and calibration of the affective system of emotions and feelings in a community of practitioners. The domain of sex is no exception as it also requires the training of skills that depend on open instruction and correction. Here too, training should manifest the qualified attainments and regulations of the group to

which the practitioner belongs. Here it is also true that if this group lets things go and loosens up the enacted standards, quality vanishes and everyone is left on her or his own. And this is precisely the state of affairs the West is witnessing. The responsibility of the communities in which youngsters live or participate, such as the family, peer group, school, work, and so on, cannot be overestimated. Sometimes, in pathological or lamentable cases, adults behave in ways that set a bad example for young people to follow. But they are an exception. If, however, adults in general spoil an easygoing approach to the body and bodily pleasures, sex becomes seriously misrepresented publicly. Those misrepresentations should be identified and should not turn sex into the dirty business it has been seen as for so long.

In other words, the sexual predicament that most of the Western world is in, according to Foucault's analysis, has severe consequences for the training of the young. The lack of a properly public nature to sex is the worst obstacle for the acquisition of feelings of quality. Indeed, before the word "sex" is even uttered, and before the genitals and sexual activities are given their true name, many people hastily add that there is more to it than just sex and sexual behavior. The danger in remaining superficial and by consequence getting stuck in infatuation and mere carnal involvement is so intensely feared that the depth and the richer dimensions of sex have to come from words that remain far removed from concrete bodies and appetites. In this way, it seems one experiences the worst of both worlds. On the conservative side, sex remains clumsy and loaded with problems because of the morals and social obligations that lurk behind it – "obligations" in the sense that one needs to be careful with the intimacy of others and that one needs to be concerned about a lasting relationship that sex has to lead to ultimately. People again hasten to say that there is more than just biology and drives. On the progressive side, among people who already have a keen appetite for the physical and lustful sides of sex, these social obligations are acknowledged. At the same time, this attitude may sometimes lead to an overestimation of the lust in which intimacy, without full-blown sex and desire, is considered worthless.

In his trilogy *The Nature of Love*, Irving Singer (1984–1987) distinguishes what he calls "appraisal" from "bestowal." Appraisal is some sort of taxation of the other's praiseworthy characteristics that fit one's own taste. Taxation can be very instrumental, as becomes clear in one-night stands. It can also be a well-balanced judgment of someone's social position and qualities, but it always involves the personal interest of the one who does the appraisal. Bestowal invests the other person with a special



worth. It is because of the intrinsic value of that person that one becomes interested in her or him.

Both bestowal and appraisal are a bodily affair and they involve sensuous pleasure. Yet, real involvement with real pleasure is very demanding. It needs the presentation of a concrete personal body (a body 2, as we would say) in which the experiential variety of men and women replaces the abstract lust machine (body 1) of medicalization and psychologization. For if there is anything that is presented in a very abstract way in the West, it is the human body. The female experience is conspicuously absent from male talk about sex. In the novel *The Bleeding Heart* by Marilyn French (1980) there is a passage which illustrates this point. After a night of lovemaking the male lover is about to leave the woman's house. As soon as the man has dressed in his business suit, the experience of the night drips off him like water off the surface of a newly waxed car. The woman is left behind, waiting for his return. She reveals herself as the guardian of the ritual that she wants to happen again so badly. She buys flowers to arrange the room, hoping to elicit the same feelings in the man again. For her, lust has been more than a bodily sensation one can just shake off. However, she waits in vain. French demonstrates sharply the differences in experience that occur when the focus is on concrete male and female perceptions of sex.

## **Ritualization of Sex and Gender**

Before elaborating the vicissitudes of ritual and sex, we will first put ritual in a proper perspective. Ritual is a key concept for the understanding of the patterning of behavior and it is indispensable for the shaping thereof. It is a common misunderstanding that ritual as symbolic practice always has to refer to something outside itself. Most often, a ritual is an act performed in its own right. It is a designed course of action, a way of doing things properly. What counts is the effort pertaining to the shaping and the design of the appropriate behaviors. This may involve tasting, smelling, feeling, hearing, and seeing but also the personal refinement of someone's sensuous perception together with all other participants. Rituals, therefore, should be understood in the context of what we said in Part One about authenticity and normativity.

A still greater misunderstanding is that ritual only belongs to the sphere of religion. Of course, in most religions the ecclesiastical authorities devise instruments for organizing people's sentiments and behavior in order to



create the appropriate atmosphere for worship, belief, and submission. Religious rituals organize meaning in order to authenticate people's exchange with the gods and to bring people's behavior under the influence of implicit norms set by the religious elite. But this does not imply that rituals belong exclusively to the religious sphere. To clarify what rituals are, Frits Staal (1989) used an answer given by Isadora Duncan as an analogy. When asked about the content of her dance, she once replied: "If I could tell you that, it would make no sense to dance." In a similar manner, rituals exist thanks to specific acts and the special way in which they are performed.

The most decisive feature of a ritual act is therefore its intimate relationship to styling and practice. The accompanying mental attitudes or states are the results of bodily practices and need not invoke a spiritual dimension as such. If we look at sexual practices from the perspective of rituals, we bring into focus the way body and sentiment become tuned. The shaping and designing of sexual behavior and experiences then becomes an important counterpart to mere knowledge of the physical machinery behind sex, which is so central in sexual science, as we will argue below.

In its tribal form, the ritualization of sex can become a way to usurp the body in its entirety. In the single act of clitoridectomy, for instance, but also in other forms of mutilating the sexual organs, the behavior of women is once and for all placed under male rule. It entails rituals in which the total incorporation of the women is achieved, and in some cases also of the men. Such practices imply severe suffering, of course, which often strengthens social ties, as is the case in hazing rituals of students. We are relating these rituals as counterpoints to the ritualization of sex in that they reveal an atavism that is no longer tolerated in most countries. In the same vein, the Chinese abandoned their foot-binding practice long ago. This was also a ritual practice in which the extreme subordination of women was achieved. Their very small feet prevented them from walking away. Although presented as a beauty ideal, its effects are devastating. But that is often the case, of course. The mutilation of parts of the body turns the body (the individual subject) into a malleable and recognizable object.

In the Western world, other rituals pertaining to sexual behavior are used. In fitness rooms and beauty salons the body is shaped and reshaped in order to obtain a presentation of self in everyday life that should trigger feelings and responses of attractiveness or awe in others. Dieting is another aspect of the same ritualizations. The daily care for the appropriate body shape and routines of calorie intake turn the body into an effective instrument in courtship, as a means to organize sexual exchange. On closer inspection, the entire industry around the makeable body betrays the

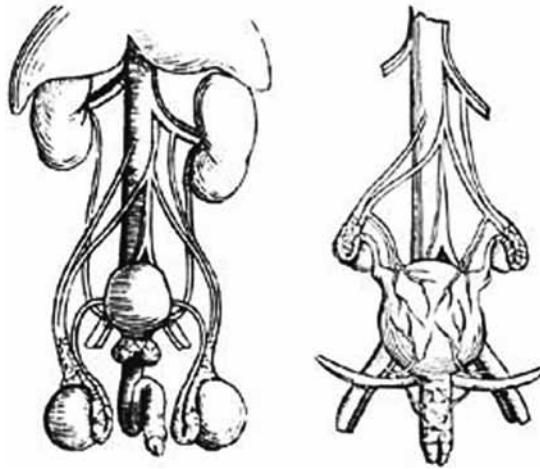
tension between a typical Western individualistic stance in sexual matters and the communal requirements with respect to bodies to fit the standard. It has its price, of course. In many Western countries, the frenzy around food, fashion, and fitness almost exclusively focuses on sexual effectiveness but without really providing the necessary skills and virtuosity when it comes to actual sexual involvement. But in the West it has not always been that way.

## The Science of Sex

Why sex and gender are so problematic in almost every society certainly has to do with the risks and obligations involved. Pregnancy, childbirth, the upbringing of children in a trustworthy environment, but also the growth of the population as a necessary means for warfare and economic workforces have always been surrounded with proto-scientific attempts to deal with fertility and sexual behavior on the basis of evidence and good thinking. Examples abound from medical knowledge in the classical world of the Greeks and Romans and also in the Arab world and Asia. And long before any detailed knowledge existed about the hormonal regulation of the fertility cycle or the electrochemical regulation of sexual behavior and affect, there were hygienics.

In many cases the population policy of rulers and administrators added to the dangers of and often negative outcomes around sex and reproduction. They put intense pressure on women, for example, to procreate at all costs. In that context alternatives were explored in which the risks could be minimized. One such alternative is explored in Peter Brown (1988). Although the main thrust of his book deals with the Church Fathers' interpretation of religious faith and worship in relation to chastity and a life in the service of God, his suggestion that their discouraging attitude toward sexual practice was, among other things, a counterforce against Roman population policy is interesting. Christianity's enthusiasm for abstinence, for example, functioned as an escape route for women in order to avoid the risks surrounding pregnancy and birth. It was one way to counter the emperors' policy of creating a recruitment pool for their armies, as was common practice in the Roman Empire.

In order to understand proto-scientific dealings with sexuality in antiquity up to more recent times, Thomas Laqueur (1990) has explored in great detail the vicissitudes of sex and gender throughout history. He argues that the classical Greeks and Romans did not distinguish the male and female body in the way we are used to doing today. In early medical



**Figure 4.1** Andreas Vesalius' *Tabulae anatomicae sex* (1538) show a remarkable resemblance between the male (left) and female (right) reproductive systems.

texts, the female body was described in male terms. It was an incomplete version of the male body, so to speak, which shows in the anatomy (see Figure 4.1). The general idea was that the man has his genitals outside, the woman has hers inside. Both therefore were equipped with the same anatomical reproductive structure. The vagina was simply on the inside, the scrotum became the uterus, and testicles had their counterpart in the ovaries. This model, which essentially held that there existed only one sex, prevailed throughout antiquity and the Middle Ages into early modern times.

As Laqueur argues, in the one-sex model it was generally assumed that the men were in charge during sex. It implied for the men a great concern with female orgasm, because that was deemed necessary for giving birth to healthy children. As such, the styling of sexual behavior was a predominantly male enterprise. Women differed only from men in degree, yet whereas men represented serenity, determination, and reasonableness, women were all flesh and weakness and the opposite of reasonableness. This idea is found throughout antiquity, in Christianity, and in the Muslim world. Women are the weak sex, unfit to reason, and they cannot do without the strong hand of men. The origin of this idea is no longer traceable to any distinct source, but it was the received view in many societies. It took quite a while before science came to grips with the real anatomical features of both men and women in their own right, and could thus contribute to understanding sexual practice and reproduction.

In the mid eighteenth century it was scientifically demonstrated that ovulation had nothing to do with sexual intercourse as such. Having an orgasm was not necessary for getting pregnant and therefore became set apart from fertilization.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, because of a new and much more precise anatomical model of the reproductive organs, the sexes became clearly differentiated, rendering the one-sex model obsolete. Laqueur claims that this could only happen after women in the upper strata of society acquired their own territory within the home. A woman's world came into existence, in which pregnancy, giving birth, and caring for her offspring within the confines of her own private territory, gave her a body of her own. Here, knowledge and changing practices reinforced each other.

Since the female body could no longer be deemed identical to that of the male body, the sexual experiences of both men and women could no longer be on a par either. It changed the responsibility of men, because medical practice took over what had formerly been the man's responsibility and under his control. Ironically, this resulted in an indifferent attitude towards female sexual needs as science and the art of erotic play drifted apart. It put an end to the healthy ritualization of sexual behavior and introduced instead the medicalization of sexual behavior. In other words, sex became of societal interest under the direction of the medical sciences. Hygiene, proper sexual orientation, the dangers of solitary sex, homosexual inclinations, and a catalogue of perversions, all had their place in a health regime orchestrated primarily by doctors and priests. As a consequence, male and female, but also homo, hetero, and other distinctions became standardized in medical jargon instead of remaining a little blurred, as often happens in real practice and lived experience. Sex was now "normalized" in medical-scientific terms.

Michel Foucault described this tension between *scientia sexualis* and *ars erotica* in his trilogy on sex mentioned above. The ritualization that was prescribed by the medical manuals and by doctors in the proto-scientific eras of the one-sex model became obsolete. It was replaced by newly acquired scientific knowledge, which was however completely separated from the way in which both sexes deal with one another experientially. In our own terms, a focus on body 1 replaced attention toward body 2. In 1931, scientists finally understood the hormonal regulation of ovulation. The first artificial birth control pills were put on the market in 1960. Sex as a behavioral practice was facilitated by it, but with respect to styling and shaping of sexual behavior this artificial birth control has also been a source for poorly ritualized sex. Medical knowledge made the ritualization that was prescribed obsolete. Both Laqueur and Foucault therefore draw our attention to the things that are as

important as scientific development: The coming and going of ritual practices, which provide a means to cultivate the lived experiences of people, especially in such an intimate domain as sex.

## Denial of the Flesh

We have already presented Christianity's alternative to the procreation pressure in the Roman Empire. Peter Brown's (1988) work on sexual renunciation can be used as an important source of the Christian alternative to Roman population policy. Robin Lane Fox (1987) also emphasizes the forceful interference of Roman emperors in the private lives of men and women in order to ensure they met their procreative duties. Christianity as a well-organized counterforce, with its emphasis on chastity and renunciation, made even more room for the female experience of cozy family life that had already been a feature of cultivated Roman sensibility, as illustrated in art in some very characteristic almost boudoir-like scenes set in the privacy of the bedroom.

Another decisive invention and intervention in the practicing of sex was the replacement of Greek and Latin ritualization by the Christian doctrine of *Agape*. This term refers to the love between man and woman as the foreshadowing and symbolization of God's love for mankind. The focus of love spiraled into a spiritual domain, and the rituals around marital love now celebrated the sacred bond between male and female. Carnal involvement was seen merely as a means to energize this fostering bond. As long as the sexual act did produce offspring, it could be consumed, but not as something in its own right. Because of this drastic shift the body became entirely subjugated to the mind or the spirit. As a result, the old pagan rituals became less fashionable. Rituals now concerned the household and family life. How much of this was begun in the organization of the Roman Empire is for historians to decide. At this point we merely want to elucidate this remarkable evolution of the rituals of love and union.

The most explicit beginnings of Christianity's denial of the flesh are to be located in the writings of two very important spokesmen: Saints Paul and Augustine of Hippo. In their adolescence these two men experienced nearly everything that this virile developmental phase has in store for young men. Saul, as Paul was called in this stage of his life, even used violence for his own pleasure. But as is so often the case with converts, their early lascivious lifestyle caused much guilt and was negated by their

later restrained and negative attitude towards sexual behavior. The dualism that was already so predominant in the philosophy of those days proved to be an asset, especially in the sexual domain. To say that the body is not all there is and that there is more than just good looks, opens up new possibilities for sexual intercourse. Spiritual qualities can be set off against bodily features. But, much more important for the Christian doctrine, good and evil as refracted in spiritual sensitivity and carnal lust could be put in opposition to each other. It thus became the main feature of Christianity that the love between man and wife was primarily seen as symbolic while actual sex became secondary.

But as we stated in Chapter 3, the sensorium does not tolerate a lifestyle that is coerced for too long. It cannot be bent *ad libitum* in one single direction. Not surprisingly, then, in the early Middle Ages the carnal side of sex was recovered from this excessive Christian spiritualization. The re-ritualization of sex occurred through the practice of courtly love. This new styling of love became fashionable in European courts, as presented in the songs and poems of the minstrels. In the first volume of his trilogy, Irving Singer (1984–1987) suggests that courtly love was the first secularizing movement in the Western world. That is, carnal love tried to escape from the narrow trammels of churchly demands and was given back to the medieval men and women. Both became thoroughly involved and submerged in passion. The *amor fugit* motif was invented: The love that never seeks consummation and that remains a never-ending longing. This kind of passion was fabricated out of the remnants of pagan sexual practices, which lived on in all sorts of sects in the Christian world. The emphasis was put primarily on the lust the knight experienced for his damsel. The consummation of passion was postponed, however, in order to train the young man's skills and to teach him the finer points of the game of love. Thus, in passion a new context for learning was created. The source of this passion lies in the pagan practices of the Cathars. These are well documented by Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie (1978). He describes how the sexual rituals of the Cathars were prosecuted by the church, more precisely by the Inquisition. Those sexual rituals dated back to Manicheistic roots. In their zest for purification and redemption, the Cathars turned the villages of southern France into sexually free towns. The idea was that to submerge is to eradicate. The Inquisition tried to repress the Cathars. Their practice was considered contagious, in the sense that the strivings of the members of the Cathar sect propagated new means of experimenting with dominant masculine desires and submissive female responses. The public initiative was again exclusively on the side of the male. The

demonstration of his restraint was the proof of real love for his lady. Fanning the fire was the lady's role.

Yet not everybody agreed that this re-ritualization created successful bonds between men and women. In *Love in the Western World*, a book that almost reads as a pamphlet, Denis de Rougemont (1983) exposes the pagan roots of this re-ritualization a little differently. He contrasts the Christian ideal of *Agape* and monogamous marriage ties with the lasciviousness of the Cathar sectarian movement. De Rougemont tries to reinstall the Christian *Agape* as a serious breach with the pagan ritual forms. He claims that these forms brought about the everlasting nagging force of passion as the mistaken real thing in lovemaking. In his view, love is founded on an equal bond between a male and a female, united in the love of God. The contribution of de Rougemont has been severely criticized as being overly on the side of the Christian Church. Whether he has a point, in that passion is often heralded as the energizing force once a marriage has become routine, is not of immediate concern. It is easy to see that passion indeed makes people whimsical and unreliable.<sup>3</sup> Much more important is that he points to the lasting effects that the ubiquitous fight between *Agape* and passion has had on the shaping of Western forms of love. The particular ideal of *Agape* has been highly influential.

## The Western Marriage Arrangement

As a result of *Agape* getting a firm stronghold in the Western, Christian world, the relationships between man and woman became organized in a new fashion. In contrast to the arranged marriages that are still common throughout Asia, and in contrast also with the parental involvement in marriage bonds that is still fashionable in the Muslim world, the West was the first to experiment with marriage bonds that are based on very little interference from parental and communal authority. To see how this is the case, we need to invoke James Brundage's (1988) book about the history of the law and sex in Christian medieval Europe that explained why the Western world continues to be so exceptional in the area of sex. Brundage shows that Christian law between 1150 and 1250 contributed significantly to the new marriage arrangement. Popes Alexander III (1159–1181) and Gregory IX (1227–1241) established over this century the law of mutual consent as the prime basis of marriage. This consent was in fact the legal aspect of *Agape* and as such love became a private affair between two lovers. This implied that parental consent or consent



of the ruling lords was no longer necessary for a man and a woman to marry. It made obsolete the common practice of giving away a daughter in marriage to another party. While in the upper regions of society, marriages in which the prime reason for marrying was money and possessions continued, the new ritualization of marriage had astonishing economic consequences for people in the lower strata of society. The possibility of establishing independently a household of their own increased the chances for people with hardly any income to thrive economically. In the long run this also contributed to overall economic prosperity. Also, from this moment onward, women in Europe could make recourse to at least the legal possibility of getting on an equal footing with men. This is not to say that they all took this opportunity or that they were allowed to take it. Yet some, albeit perhaps shaky, foundation for the emancipation of women was laid very early in time compared to what happened in other countries.

This model, also known as the European Marriage Model, became the common model throughout the Western world. This could not have happened if there had not been this struggle between *Agape* and romantic passion. Marriage was no longer based on sexual attraction that could easily be manipulated in relation to family interests by the father or other local authorities. Instead, it was based on the attraction energized by the partners themselves, and it needed elaboration and refinement. Moreover, this form of marriage was sanctioned by the Church. Tine de Moor and Jan Luiten van Zanden (2006) argue that this institutional provision formed the basis of both Western capitalism and equality between the sexes. Cooperation between man and wife, instead of competition, glued the two together in common economic interests, which created a much more balanced bond than those found in other parts of the world. Of course, there were many local differences and regional marriage setups that created a backlash, but on the whole the northern European region profited economically from “girl power” supported by the new marriage arrangements.

## The Education of the Senses

It is not our task here to provide a complete taxonomy of the world's sexual rituals, but we want to redirect attention to what is often neglected in the Western individual outlook on sex as merely recreation or procreation. Sex is also a means to educate the senses. Neglecting this aspect runs the risk of missing the entire point of what is at stake in sexual behavior.



We are not implying that there is no learning outside the ritual context, but once there is a broadly shared orderly practice in which the necessary training can take place, it is much easier to set clear inspiring public examples in order to combat the barren land of sexual overstimulation and misplaced sexualization. It is important for maintaining the right balance between the points of application of the rituals. It can be the body and bodily comportment, including desire and lust, or it can be the spiritual dimension of creating a bond between partners as well as a necessary secure environment for offspring. In that regard the public face of sex that is present everywhere in the Western world is wanting. We have presented historical examples to draw from. But of course we cannot leave out a short excursion into the global exchange of sexual practices and rituals that has been going on for centuries.

### Alternative styling of love and sex

From the Far East, sexual techniques were imported by audacious explorers like Richard Francis Burton and Foster Fitzgerald Arbuthnot, who translated the *Kama Sutra* ([1883]2004). Today these techniques are broadly available to everyone. In the East, a certain orthopraxis instead of orthodoxy in sexual matters is still maintained. However, writers like V.S. Naipaul (1981) have warned of an exaggeration of Eastern skills in sexual behavior. The introduction of Christianity has taken its toll there too. In a similar vein, Frits Staal (2004) argued that the restrictive attitude to homosexuality which is sometimes found nowadays in Asia was never indigenous. It was imported together with Christianity, which had always been opposed to pagan ritualizations of sex, as we related in the paragraph above on the Cathars. Yet, in large regions of the world, including Asia, there has never been a need for the kind of sexual liberation that the West has experienced. In those regions, forms of ritualization were preserved in which sexual expression maintained a public face in styled forms. This is also the main reason why in Eastern tracts and manuals on sexual practices, ritualization and virtuosity go hand in hand. Both for men and women, techniques are available which enable both sexes to put more skill and art into their sexual behavior. Tantra and Qigong are still available, even though they have ceased to be of daily inspiration in most countries in the Eastern hemisphere.

In contradistinction, in the West, sexual virtuosity has almost disappeared and no clear efforts are being made to draw sex into the sphere of skill, rather than instruction or reading about the workings of the various sexual organs. It requires some inventiveness with respect to a

new language in which sexual skills and virtuosity can be expressed, because in many cases even simple research into sex raises suspicion. Who does not remember the subdued giggling during the first lessons on the reproductive organs in school biology classes? The education of the senses is far from common practice in the West. And yet, it is the only way in which sexual superficiality and decay can be prevented.

To be sure, body 1 remains of course the substratum for the expressive and experiencing body 2, also in the case of sex. We know that the central nervous system can be divided into a voluntary and an involuntary system. The former controls what we consciously tell our bodies to do, whereas the latter controls what we do automatically: breathing, pulse, blood pressure, digestion, and so on. We are not implying that such knowledge is irrelevant; quite the contrary. However, in the training routines for all kinds of Eastern martial sports techniques, the accent on body 2 modifies body 1 in such a way that it can perform astonishing skills. The same is true for millennia-old sexual techniques. What looks to us like a predominantly autonomous process, such as having an orgasm, can be put under the regime of willful action, even to the degree that no sperm but merely the sensation alone is produced. It is a matter of training the pubococcygeus muscle, which is being rediscovered in some circles, as can be seen from a search on the Internet. Such techniques carry with them the possibility of the re-ritualization of sexual behavior, as do so many other practices of Tantra and Qigong. It is, of course, not our intention to turn the bedroom into a training place for orgiastic acrobatics. We do conclude, however, that youngsters who never come into contact with skill training, massage, and virtuosity in the area of sex and relations tend to remain crippled when it comes to bringing pleasure and joy into a domain so necessary and so indispensable as love and care.

Whereas in sport and play, training and practice are normal in order to cast the body machine in the appropriate shape and to provide it with the necessary skills, sexuality and intimacy are hardly approached in terms of trainable techniques. There are promising experiments regarding the intimacy of the body, to be sure. School authorities that dare to offer their pupils an early massage before they begin lessons help to reduce stress and contribute to the diminishing of boisterous behavior among boys. In this way, the production of the hormone oxytocin is enhanced. This creates a new public face of what bodily rapprochement entails. Although the legitimation for introducing massage is often quickly sought in the chemistry of body 1, probably to avoid any unwanted discussion, we prefer to focus on the re-ritualization that such massage makes possible.

The toolkit we have provided in Part One can be fully employed: social shaping and normative correction of behaviors and feelings, continuous training leading to automaticities in everyday life, arrangements in which these routines fit such that experiences of authenticity are established. They can all be put into place in the understanding of sex as well. Although it seems hardly possible to devise a learning school for sexual behavior in a society in which moral outrage is so easily triggered – especially if it concerns youngsters – it would be wise to rethink the precise consequences of a lack of such an education.

Although it is often very difficult to observe female submissiveness in human interactions, and although it is even much more difficult to observe it in the bedroom, it is generally assumed that men enjoy privileges that women do not have. One telling privilege is that men are less involved in childcare. Still, it becomes increasingly clear that caring for and stimulating the newborns in our society is not just a task for women alone, despite all kinds of biological fitness arguments put forward by men. This is not to say that biological differences do not matter. They do, but necessary education of the senses could be given to men as well if new arrangements can be devised for eliciting and sustaining the necessary feeling and behaviors. One telling observation is that present-day buggies tend to look like all-terrain wagons. It quickly turns a negative image of childcare into a ready-made male enterprise as well. Moreover, predominantly men are involved in extreme forms of sexual behavior. Women rarely are and they generally do not initiate human trafficking either. They are less involved in pornography, they rarely abuse children, they much less often trade their aging male partner in for a younger one (although “cougars” seem to enjoy an increasing popularity nowadays), and women are minimally involved in rape. Everywhere around the world women are much more responsible. When given a microcredit they generally do not spend it on booze or gadgets. Women need not be angels in order to show, much more than men, that their behaviors are tightly knit to rituals of caring for themselves and for the community.

We do not want to romanticize this so-called “female business.” Instead we emphasize actual accomplishments, things women do, also when they hold executive positions in large companies. In the world of power and influence, female virtuousness is increasingly explored in order to learn its secret. The world of women provides an experimental lab for patriarchy, so to speak. An equal position of women has to be designed in order to combat persistent behavioral patterns that seem to flow naturally from biological predispositions and that are furthermore culturally ampli-

fied in distinct local human groups. Privileges of the dominating male segment of society are conspicuously focused on preserving power and influence. One cannot be specific enough in summing up what the burden of women is compared to that of men. It is often said that, without male inventiveness, perseverance, creativity, endurance, and courage the civilizing mission would not have succeeded. Even if this were true, why should not both sexes have their own specialty and contribution? There are probably no biological fixities that cannot be compensated for in local cultural arrangements that elicit mutual assistance instead of rivalry. It requires a drastic change in the terminology with which behavioral components in male and female relationships are identified. The language of suppression often has biological overtones. But once again, biology and social science should not be played against each other. We need them both. Having said that, the language of the behavioral sciences can at least be much more sensitive to the patterning involved. It shifts the focus from persistence to malleability, from a fixed state to the possibility of change for both sexes.

## Notes

- 1 We did not come across any survey that explicitly deals with sexual skill, even though it is the subject of some manuals; see, e.g., one of the earliest (apart from the historically important ones like the *Kama Sutra*), *The Art of Sexual Ecstasy* (Anand 1989). Anecdotal information abounds, however. In interviews and biographies one often finds complaints about men boasting about their sexual accomplishment, whereas women, if asked, often relate some discomfort and disappointment. The same is true of many women's first sexual experiences.
- 2 Brendan P. Zietsch and Pekka Santtila (2011) have argued that the genetic analysis of orgasmic function in twins and siblings does not support the by-product theory of female orgasm. This theory holds that the female orgasm is an evolutionary by-product of the male orgasm. Its refutation by no means has solved the mystery of the female orgasm. Little wonder, then, that in the eighteenth century it remained a mystery as well, despite its denounced role in pregnancy.
- 3 William Leach (1980) argued that women often find the male appeal to passion problematic. They criticize men for acting irresponsibly once they are overcome with passion and lust. And men who leave their similarly aged wives for a younger woman who allegedly can reignite his fire are often criticized too.

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# Status

## *The Body of Class and Organized Compliance*

### Class Revisited

In the Netherlands, but presumably everywhere in the world, low social status is associated with a persistent and defining set of behaviors. It is not always immediately visible, as it hides between the great diversity of people in public life. We sketch the cliché image that nevertheless can easily be confirmed by looking at a random underprivileged area in a Dutch (or any other North European) city. One is unsurprised to see heavily tattooed arms and sometimes necks. Bare and often far from slim women's bellies are not considered offensive, nor are the much too tight clothes that tend to reveal more than one may have wished for. Of course there are many people whose habits and preferences are simply not ours. But, on closer inspection, these people are often less educated. Their children in turn are less motivated to attend and stay at school. They instead follow their parents' example and lifestyle. The children linger near the bottom of the labor market and sometimes have no work at all. Their houses are often of low quality and located in densely built neighborhoods, or else they live in smaller villages, far from the city. When in groups, particularly among the young, the more subtle forms of social class become more obvious. The vocabulary, the topics of discussion, and

the volume of speech reveal the lower level of education. Moreover, they move differently and while they may be dressed in the latest fashion, often mastery of the particular styles in the middle or higher classes is lacking. People from lower social strata tend to have jobs at an early age and their spending patterns often differ from those of youth with better or more education. They show that they make money, thereby displaying their characteristic tastes. Girls use too much makeup and guys show their commitment to clothing and gadgets in ways that are too exaggerated according to people of average or higher incomes. Also their diets are often different, which eventually becomes apparent.

To be sure, this is a cliché and we do not want to convey any moral judgments about other people's lifestyles. What is at stake for us, is making visible the groups that we focus on in the first part of this chapter. The idea of dividing society into classes has become unfashionable. And it is not so easy to do today, because all sorts of lifestyles have pervaded different layers in society. Heavily tattooed arms are also part of the lifestyle of many very well-to-do soccer players or rock stars and trashy clothing is sometimes very fashionable. Employees with little education are most often able to share in the good life that came along with technological and commercial innovations. Market researchers are convinced that a classification into social classes no longer provides insights into the needs and spending patterns of people. However, when used, indicators to assess someone's social class include occupation, property, housing situation, income, education, and "values." This yields the standard social stratification of the upper-upper class (including wealthy families with a traditional past), the lower-upper class (e.g., people with self-acquired wealth), the upper-middle class (including people in liberal professions), the lower-middle class (skilled workers and lower civil servants), and finally the lower classes (unskilled personnel).

The lowest segment of society is often no longer classified as an independent layer because of the stigmatizing effect. Yet it contains groups of people who were highlighted in the work of the British psychiatrist Anthony Daniels. In his book *Life at the Bottom*, under the pen-name Theodore Dalrymple (2001), he rages against the upper class of intellectuals. In the 1960s, Dalrymple argues, the intellectuals claimed an unfettered lifestyle for themselves (though in practice they controlled excesses occurring in their own ranks), which they then encouraged to grow rampant in a new "underclass," with disastrous effect. For instance, many intellectuals were skeptical of a monogamous lifestyle. However, its replacement by serial monogamy still revealed some willingness toward social



engagement. By contrast, in the lower regions of society, such skepticism turned into an overall inability to engage in any lasting relationships. In the lowest social segments the so-called “permissive society” of the notorious 1960s led to such an unrestrained lifestyle that any sense of self-responsibility disappeared with it, according to Dalrymple.

What exactly was the problem? The people at the top of society became preoccupied with the unfolding of their own self. They emphasized assertiveness, independence, and rebellion. They experimented a lot, especially in the domain of sexuality. When these behavioral patterns and ideals seeped through the other social strata into the lower segments of society, they underwent a hopeless transformation and turned into shallow experiences and lack of discipline. It is unclear exactly how this came about. Dalrymple, and in the Netherlands also Gabriel Van den Brink, speculate that socially low persons need a new moral revival; not so much in terms of an authoritarian approach, as happened in the past, but in terms of explicating the norms and standards to which people need to commit themselves. It is much better to convince people of the need for rules than to subject them to a policy of zero tolerance, say both Dalrymple and Van den Brink. The upper-middle class, already accustomed to equality, independence, and commitment, should be leading in this respect. After all, says Dalrymple, the underclass has fallen victim to a “learned helplessness” that paralyzes its members. This means that people do not take the initiative in changing their circumstances. They do not make personal choices that help them and their offspring out of their misery. Instead, they tend to sit back and wait for social workers and the welfare state to help them out. In this way they more or less “learn” to be passive or helpless and to leave others to take the initiative.

All of this Dalrymple attributes to the example of the ideologues who in the 1960s only took care of themselves. That same class should therefore be called upon to do something about it, as Van den Brink (2004) agrees. Van den Brink does not endorse Dalrymple’s conservatism, because he dismisses the conformity and dullness of old-fashioned decency. Instead, he is interested in more involvement and more concern from the higher echelons of society, as an antidote for all the lethargy at the bottom. The upper classes should clarify the rules and live up to them, argues Van den Brink. It is, however, questionable whether explicating and clarifying, or even offering people a coping or self-management course, will suffice. For solutions to be effective, we must first find out why the behavioral patterns that occur naturally in the upper class are so difficult to establish at the bottom of society.



## Demarcation of an Underclass

To be sure, the class of those who are lagging socially is not identical to Dalrymple's marginalized underclass. The majority of the people who suffer from social disadvantages lead a virtuous life. At the aggregate level (see Chapter 3) the focus is usually on low income and little education. Poverty is certainly there, but not everywhere, and it does not have to lead to antisocial behavior either. It is clear, however, that groups of disadvantaged people have a low social status. Ruling classes have always made sure that other people were docile and willing to continue to do the poorly paid work. An important instrument to that end is the division of status. Having a high social status is seen by many as one of the most important things in this world. High status is associated with financial resources, freedom, comfort, space, and a degree of popularity that makes it attractive for other people to seek their company. People of high status are invited to important events, they are constantly praised, and receive lots of positive attention.

As always in this book, the granting and acquisition of status also involves patterns of behavior that are enacted in the inherently social group to which one belongs. The trick is to understand the behavioral patterns of the upper classes and the lower social strata in such a manner that it is at once clear why the elite was able to refine its behavioral styling while the people at the bottom layer of society did not succeed in doing so on a large scale. That is not just a matter of seeing one crucial principle that applies to both in a single simplifying sweep. Psychologically it involves a search for the maintenance of status divisions. Although it was generally considered refreshing that from the top down the narrow-mindedness of the 1950s had come to an end, this had unfavorable effects in the lower strata. After all, the top class already showed mastery of the kinds of behavioral skills that are relevant and valuable in social exchange and traffic, whereas people in the lower regions lacked such skills. It continued to hamper them in social mobility and in changing their circumstances. Of course, the lower classes also benefited from rising prosperity and they too got access to the goods with which the higher classes surrounded themselves. Houses, cars, and mobile phones became widely available for the lower classes, as well as fashion and other means to provide a unique position in modern society. Also the ideals of empowerment, assertiveness, and resistance to authority reached the bottom levels of society. Nevertheless, the advantages they got or realized with these new ideals and resources remained relatively limited

in the sense that they did not really effect an exchange with other strata. Many people in the lower segment remained confined to their own world.

We have to make another distinction with respect to the lower social strata, however. Clearly there are disadvantaged people. But there are also people in the lower (and to some extent in the middle) segments who refuse somehow even to relate to the opportunities offered by movement to or association of interests with a higher class. They view the elite as boastful, living their own sanctioned lifestyle, and they appear to reinforce their deliberately chosen identification with the bottom segment in a way in which gut feelings dictate their preferences and judgments. Sometimes they are referred to as populists and they become ever more visible in public life in the West. They are prominent in many TV shows and have gained a strong voice in current politics, certainly in the Netherlands. Whether there is a clear line to be drawn between this self-acclaimed lower position and the disadvantaged in general still remains to be seen. It is also unclear to what extent the same predicament in which many of the lower class have been in for generations has in fact determined the pejorative attitudes of the populist sections. This self-proclaimed anti-establishment group is, however, not part of our analysis here. We focus on the lower classes in general, as opposed to those at the top.

For the disadvantaged class of the common folk, the tearing down of the authority and cohesion of the ruling class witnessed in the 1960s still did not result in greater social mobility. Indeed, the contrast with the rest of society has become, and continues to grow, greater. In the Netherlands, for instance, many children miss out on vocational education (in 2010 there were about 40,000 dropouts from secondary vocational education school). Many of them display patterns of behavior that seriously limit their chances of social success. On the labor market, they are second or third choice. Again, it is not very helpful to simply state that in the lower classes the new ideals and resources are not accompanied by the necessary "cultural capital." We have to assess properly what exactly is lacking. Primarily it has to do with insufficient knowledge and lack of skills to properly estimate the new societal accomplishments. As always, the rub is the social arrangements which do not present the necessary opportunities to encounter and train the practices that are common in the middle and higher circles. Blaming the lack of cultural capital is putting the cart before the horse, as was the case with the discussions of norms and values. What we should understand is precisely why cultural capital (as patterns in behavior) grew so unevenly distributed in the population in the first place.

## High versus Low

When historians describe the modernization of life that was triggered by the Industrial Revolution in the West, but also by the so-called “industrious revolutions” throughout Europe and the rest of the world which preceded the outburst of wealth in the large capitals of Europe, they generally stress the changes in lifestyle that went with it. The new “bourgeoisie,” as they were called, acquired exotic goods with which they tried to distinguish themselves from the common people. Big warehouses replaced small shops in the cities, and goods manufactured in great quantity became an alternative to the handcrafted pieces that had been used on a much smaller basis by the upper classes, to create a distance in status and wealth between the bourgeoisie and the rest. The larger the group of bourgeoisie became, the more they could participate in society, which also meant that they could design a new lifestyle with the new means that had become available. The goods and styles that were previously exclusively the privilege of the aristocrats and the nobility did not just trickle down to the bourgeoisie. Particularly the upper stratum of the bourgeoisie gained considerable wealth and developed their own behavioral styles that they only partly modeled on those of the elite, as Richard Sennett (1977) showed. The lifestyles of the bourgeoisie did not have to represent the same exclusivity.

Chris Bayly (2004) relates how the introduction of breakfast in the London households of the bourgeois class was one such distinctive feature. It could occur because new traded goods became available, that were brought home with the ships that this new class could use. No longer was world trade primarily in the hands of the aristocrats and other people of hereditary wealth. Dinner utensils, spices, and exotic art forms helped to create the homes of the distinguished new well-to-do class. Those who acquired new means of living through ingenuity and trade strove to compete with royalty and nobility for acknowledgment. Status was no longer something one was born with but something one could acquire. The pressing question was how this fast-acquired power and status could compete with the traditional form that ran in noble families around and down from the princely court. Where and how to learn the practices to cope with the acquired status in such a way that others are indeed impressed?

One of the first to look at this problem was the economist Thorstein Veblen in *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (1899). This book had a great

impression because it gave a broad outline of what the American elites did to impress others. Of course they made use of their money, but much more important was their conspicuous consumption, according to Veblen: a show-off of what the newly rich were able to do. They showed in particular that they did not need to do any labor. In this way, the newly rich demonstrated their high standards of living, and while they contributed next to nothing to labor work, they often excelled in intellectual skills and achievement. The women often looked like mannequins, displaying the tastes and preferences of their class and clearly communicating: "I do not have to work." But while the members of this leisure class, as Veblen called it, were far from backward in presenting the latest fashion, when it came to participation in the advances of the industrial, modernizing society they took a much more conservative stance. The men retained some of the characteristics of virile tribal groups: hunting and sports. Gambling too belonged to the distinctive features of the leisure class, as well as being benefactors to the poor out of religious motivation. It all showed where the money was and in a sense it resembled the conspicuous potlatch (an abundant feast for members of rival tribes given by the chief) of Indian tribes in North America. Perhaps it was motivated by what Simon Schama has termed "the embarrassment of riches." Guilt about fortuitous inherited wealth was bought off by generosity.

About 50 years after Veblen's book, Charles Wright Mills (1956) looked differently at the same rich class. He confronted Veblen's idea of big spending. The newly rich did not squander their assets, Mills argued, but instead they worked very hard in order to gain and maintain power and influence. In other words, Veblen had presented an exaggerated picture. To surround oneself successfully with the paraphernalia of power is actually hard work, Mills observed.

In a sense, the two books comprise two extremes. Veblen put an emphasis on the remains of the noble class in the *nouveau riche* of the leisure class. Mills emphasized corporate power, politics, and the military apparatus. However, how status actually works is not really revealed in those approaches. How power positions are maintained and why conspicuous consumption can go on in times of poverty remains an enigma. Why are the lower and middling classes in such awe of those in power? To understand where the difference between high and low stems from, we have to find out what the leisure class and the power elite have in common.

Reading Mills as the critic of Veblen obscures the fact that those in power still display the result of their hard work in forms that are conspicuous and overly greedy. Both the leisure class of Veblen and the

power elite of Mills enjoy the peculiar pleasure of setting themselves off against the lower ranks of society. Greed certainly needs to be qualified here in psychological terms. In our opinion, the behavioral economist Dan Ariely (2008) is right that nasty characteristics of the human species interfere with rational economic procedure. But it is far too easy to blame weak human nature if in fact conspicuous consumption is a way to set one class off against the other. It is not just a matter of personal vices. We also have to invoke the tuning and calibration of the senses in “the old boys’ network.” Greed is hardly a personal affair. It is a group phenomenon, rightfully placed by Veblen in the upper class as the motivating background against which the special position of the powerful is continuously stimulated. What is at stake is a quality, or a production process, in this conspicuous display that keeps people in the lower regions of society in their place, and at the same time keeps those at the top in positions to reign and rule, and thus amplifies the differences. A decisive insight in this respect comes from the writings of the French anthropologist and sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, who grew up in the tradition of Émile Durkheim. In his book *The Logic of Practice* (1990) he introduces the notion of *habitus*.

### Habitus

The issue of high status versus low status is about the reproduction of social relations. History on the whole reveals a recurring immense effort to keep people in their place. This occurred in every powerful kingdom or empire. It requires maintaining the compliance of those people who are accustomed to working for their superiors. Of course, this is true in virtually every institution and every sector where people are at work. Organizing the required continued compliance typically happens in the gentlest possible way, because violence at some point always causes resistance. Let there be no mistake: from time to time abuse of power will be deployed, as we know from history. Sooner or later, however, the human sensorium will turn against violence. Pain, hatred, and humiliation can be tolerated for a long time, but never to such an extent that people really get used to the oppression. Much more profitable, and often less costly, is the compliance that seems to occur as a matter of course. It is on this phenomenon that Bourdieu focuses his attention. He developed the concept of *habitus*, a kind of attitude in which people’s actions and feelings are imbued. The English word *habit* is related to the concept, of course. Bourdieu calls the *habitus* rather cryptically a “structured structure” that is at the same time structuring. As such, he indicates that the

habitus is formed in a particular social environment, and that this attitude in turn affects the way in which a person behaves. "Attitude" must not be understood in a purely mental sense, here. It also refers to one's posture, movements, speech, feelings, and strivings. The term is used to explicate the sensitivities someone has, and one's typical aspirations. An important aspect of habitus is thus that it is largely observable in someone's various expressive styles.

By using this concept, an important reconciliation has been brought about between the sociologists' preference for structures that leave out individual voluntary acts, and psychological explanations in terms of personal agency. Sociologists tend to explain the latter away. Yet, agency comes in various forms ranging from anonymous bodily structures to conscious acts. Psychologists generally are in favor of some form of personal agency, which sociologists in their turn abhor. In the hope, perhaps, to bridge the gap between a psychological and sociological analysis, Bourdieu comes up with a feature of structure that at the same time can serve as the focus of the formative social system and as a non-anonymous but also not too personal agent: the body and its activities. This is laid down in the idea of habitus. In unalloyed French structuralist jargon, a very useful insight is thus launched: In their daily whereabouts, people acquire bodily practices that shape and refine their experiences. In this way the bodies of the laborer, the construction worker, the pastor, the clerk, the doctor, the lawyer, the *nouveau riche*, and so on come into being. Such bodies are male or female, refined or crude, gracious or ungainly. But in the perception of Bourdieu they are first and foremost bodies of class.

When compared to the work of Veblen and Mills, and with respect to the theme of power relations and status, Bourdieu's view is certainly innovative. He clearly profited from Marcel Mauss' pioneering lessons about body techniques. In the 1930s, Mauss developed the idea that people all over the world use bodily techniques (*techniques du corps*) in their daily activities. The word "techniques" should be taken literally. Mauss observed, for instance, that mothers in tribal communities developed their own technique to give birth to children, without help from others. He discovered that the women could sit on their heels in ways that were unknown in the West. He also discovered why African carriers were not troubled by fatigue because they had mastered a special skill in walking. They moved their feet under their bodies in such a way that they did not have to lift up the burden on their heads with every step – unlike the way many soldiers carry their rucksacks. Bourdieu takes over Mauss's ideas, although he leaves out the technical part. He remains unclear about how habitus works exactly. The greatest danger, however, is that habitus

readily becomes interpreted again as some sort of independent operating entity. We are strongly opposed to this. Just as culture is not an entity with causal power, the habitus cannot be such a thing either. Having said that, the whole idea of habitus remains very useful, because of its focus on bodily practice and shaped expressive styles. Habitus becomes the subsuming name for the patterns we can perceive in a person's behavior, and literally in a person's body (posture, accent, patterns of movement and expression, clothing, and so on).

Bourdieu's core idea is that practices are inscribed into the body, quite literally (*incarner* is a term that he uses and it connotes flesh, as in "to end up in the flesh"). Without people being aware of it, their bodies become styled according to practices and artifacts in which they are immersed in daily life. As such, the typical tough bodies, postures, and attitudes of the street worker manifest themselves, as do the delicate hands of the office clerk, the straight back of the soldier, the strong, worn hands of the farmer, and so on. But it is not just the physical appearance that becomes shaped. As argued before, attitudes, preferences, feelings, and manners of speech also acquire group-typical characteristics that are often referred to as life-style. In a similar manner, Bourdieu argues, indulgence and timidity become habitually established as well. This is a particularly important point to explain the regeneration and reproduction of social relations of power and inequality. The children of the upper class practice the postures, movements, beliefs, customs, and language of their parents as a matter of course. The children from the lower classes do so too, naturally. It then becomes easily understandable that, once these children meet, patterns of dominance, poaching, eloquence, and ready wit on the part of the higher-class children will likely overrule patterns of compliance, shyness, and lack of eloquence of lower-class children. Without having to attach a moral label to the behavior of either individual, relationships of dominance and inequality in terms of social mobility will tend to be re-established over generations. It is thus a seminal insight of Bourdieu that the reproduction of social relations and circumstances is closely tied to the shaping of embodied practices in the group. His habitus theory therefore acquires a psychological dimension that is unusual for sociologists. In the cultural psychological terminology we use in this book, high versus low and power versus compliance are closely tied to the particular expressivity of body 2.

### The body of class

Many academics, particularly in social research, feel a certain unease at receptions and other meetings with other professionals and administra-



tors. They lack confidence in their ability to network, lack fluency in small talk, or the courage to confront directors or board members while confidently handling a glass and plate of food. Moreover, they are not really used to formal dress codes, which also brings some uncertainty to the social scene. It is precisely the directors and managers who display a natural easiness and nonchalance. They may even possess a double-barrelled name, which is common to members of the upper classes, or otherwise display very clearly that they come from upper middle-class strata in society. As Mick Matthys (2010) has demonstrated, the contrast is easily observable in academic circles because they are populated with social climbers who have benefited from studying. Among social scientists, but also among doctors who come from lower- or middle-class families, there are many social climbers who find that, despite all their professional knowledge and skills, they lack what it takes to become full members of intellectual circles. It sometimes makes them jealous or critical towards members of the highest social classes.

Charisma too is a bodily practice that meets with envy in some groups and worship in others. It does not belong automatically to the equipment of bodies of class at the top. A lot of training is involved to acquire the appropriate skills. Parents correct their sons and daughters continuously when they look sloppy, with slumped shoulders and with unarticulated speech. When charisma is not easily attained, compensation is sought in more cunning ways to be authoritative. Many people know examples of a potentate who cannot lean on natural superiority and therefore resorts to terror and malice. The elite is infested with grumpy, pot-bellied “dictators” who are impeccably dressed and demand a similar immaculate style from the people around them, so as to compensate for their own lack of charisma. That is wonderfully observed in *The Forsyte Saga* by John Galsworthy, for instance. Susceptibility to the effects of charisma requires embodied practice too. People do not admire celebrities out of a rational assessment of their quality. It is also obvious that not every celebrity has a likeable appearance from birth. The jet set generally has an obvious style associated with influence and status that somehow does elicit admiration in many others. They are people who have been at the top long enough to acquire the prevailing habitus, we could say. They live in homes in which the body becomes streamlined through design and artifacts of good taste, through excellent food and fine clothing. This clearly distinguishes the people at the top from those with a lowbrow style (which is as much a physical practice).

Children in the upper classes mix with visitors at parties, gatherings, or soirées in a natural manner. Their bookcases at home are filled with



real books and literature instead of *Reader's Digest*. Their conversations tend to be about important issues almost automatically. Getting behind socially is impossible, unless one has a very recalcitrant son or daughter. When at university, the children associate with groups that traditionally represent the social mores of the top people and they are introduced to the famous "old boys' networks." Our focus here is not on some special talents. They will be there, to be sure. What is at stake for us in this argument, however, is the body of class. That is, the body that is styled in accordance with the particular circumstances and practices at the top. The discipline, which is taught to the newcomers, the rules of the social game, and obedience to the current conventions of the group are first and foremost things that happen to the embodied person. They are not mere propositions one must learn by heart. Emotions become streamlined into delicate feelings. Status attributes, ranging from cigars to cars and watches, from fine tailored suits to playing golf and polo, are all flawlessly woven into daily practices. In those arrangements, the body becomes sensitized and adjusted to firmly express itself and to remain distinct from parvenus who still have a long way to go before they can acquire a similar style incarnated in their bodies. Instead of talking about their values or enforcing them in a contrived manner, the upper class displays its status and values by means of a fully embodied *souplesse*. As such, newcomers and social climbers are quickly unmasked.

What we have thus established for the upper strata of society is also valid in the lower classes. As a psychiatrist, Dalrymple had access to the experiences of the underclass. We already noted that he saw a lot of learned helplessness, instead of the determination to stop the downward spiral. Research into the underclass is uncommon. Bill Buford's book *Among the Thugs* (1993), about football hooligans in Britain, presents a good example that did not emerge from the treatment room of a psychiatrist. We learn again that embodiment and habitus are crucial. Buford explains how some members of the lower classes experience their sport and why their behavior may spiral out of control. Once more, it is the body of the supporter that is crucial. It is the instrument with which to experience a match in the first place. The usually reticent body of the Englishman (or for that matter the Dutch, German, and so on) undergoes a complete transformation once it enters the stadium, or the crowds in the surrounding streets. Football violence has little to do with social deprivation. Tickets, traveling, and staying abroad as a supporter require a well-filled wallet. What is crucial, however, is body 2. It is this body, amid others in the group, including the feelings and automated behaviors, that is activated time and again when some supporters get together.

Buford himself takes recourse to a body 1-like interpretation in terms of self-intoxication and ecstasy. That seems obvious, because the excitement does need a physical substratum or vehicle to occur. But ecstasy often precisely occurs when people are together in a very intense atmosphere. Anthropologists and psychologists of religion have pointed out how trances can be induced through intense rituals. Chanting, dancing, and drug use lead to a state of de-individuation in which the person loses himself or herself in order to disappear into the masses present. It is an effect similar to attending rock concerts, dance parties, and big sports events. Émile Durkheim (1912) called it a state of effervescence. It is crucial that the ecstatic experiences result from participation in the crowd. It is impossible to get involved this way on your own, except in a few cases of drug use and perhaps solitary listening to very moving music. But research into drug use and even the placebo effect has demonstrated that the rush accompanying marijuana or alcohol is to an important extent social in origin. What one is “required” to feel when on a marijuana high is learned in a group of experts, as Howard Becker (1953) showed. Placebo research into the effects of alcohol demonstrates that people become ecstatic when they only think their drinks contain alcohol, even if this was not actually the case.

What happens to hooligans happens to youth hanging around on the streets, and to other forms of people flocking together, although the intensity can vary, of course. People acquire their habitus in the social environment in which they train and shape their behaviors. In street gangs, highly affective routines can be easily observed. We are not saying that this fully explains the loutish behavior and the brutality of some of these youngsters. Involved also is the absence of any education of the senses. The boys and girls then fall back on their habitus as acquired in social circles in which this education is absent. The incorporation of individual youngsters in street gangs often results in insensitivity towards the common practices in society at large. Why exactly this is the case is still unclear. We do not have an answer, apart from saying that more Buford-like research is needed. The focus of research should be on the styling of habitual practices and the accompanying feelings, rather than on a presumed lack of norms and values.

People from disadvantaged backgrounds acquire within their own group eating habits, preferences, and styles of dressing. They also tend to learn forms of communication in which bodily prowess and raised voices present rather physical contributions to the so-called conversation, rather than articulated speech and argumentation. Many elements in their social environment sensitize children to their place in society. Ordinary

household utensils and cheap furniture with no special design qualities create the framework for subsequent preferences in their children. This is not to say that children always follow their parents, but once preferences become established it takes a different social environment to change those preferences. At a later age, such change is less expected to occur.

Often in the homes of rapid social climbers the taste of “home” is still recognized: gold, marble, and porcelain may reveal the fixed predilections of one’s original milieu concerning the possessions of the rich. Again, we do not want to make any value judgments. People are free to develop and enjoy their taste. What we want to point out are the obvious reproductions of taste and lifestyle, and the often very slow changes in style. That is the case in all social backgrounds. The examples we give are intended to clarify the repetition and the reproduction of social relations associated with them. They may lead to social stagnation. Arguing about taste is fruitless because of the affective and non-rational nature of tastes and preferences. They involve sensitivity rather than conviction. It will be clear by now that this sensitivity (in particular that of body 2) is obtained through implicit training and habituation within the arrangements of the own group. Bourdieu would say that taste is an expression of habitus. Naturally, this also fully applies to the tastes of the members of the higher social strata.

### The ethnic body

In Chapter 7 on ethnicity we will see that belonging to a minority is also, and perhaps primarily, a physical, embodied affair. Incorporation into the own group has to be taken literally here. By means of their bodies, people shape their connection to the other group members. They move in accordance with the prevailing expressive styles. In effect, because people’s own bodies and feelings become similar to those of important others, people feel at home and they sense that their expressive styles are natural and authentic. Standing, walking, and dancing are common moves that often display striking differences when compared to the common moves of people in different groups. In the positive case, the differences are experienced as catchy and colorful. In the negative case, people find the behaviors of others intimidating. The bicultural competence that will be elaborated upon in Chapter 7 requires physical skills and is literally a matter of “moving” in both segments. Contrarily, indigenous citizens need to learn to cope with their hypersensitive responses to physicality of minority members. Quite often the source of discrimination is an immediately given sensory response. In Part One we explained how preferences

and sometimes disgust can be immediately and automatically felt. A negative reaction to an exotic name on an application form does not have to be malevolently motivated to have a detrimental effect on the chances of the applicant. The persistence of discrimination is partly due to such habitual physical reactions. Unlearning these sensitivities is a matter of training, just like the learning was. The only way to establish this is through frequent and close interactions with members of the minorities. This point clarifies once more that successful integration is a matter of practices, rather than values, and practices need to be sustained on two sides: both by newcomers and residents.

### Fit and misfit

“Class” is often used as an aggregate feature. From a cultural psychological perspective, however, class always refers to an intrinsic social group. This group is indispensable for acquiring habitus. Usually, one’s own family is the arena in which the sensitizing takes place and where the first forms of resilience become established. The way parents and siblings converse at the dinner table, the language that is used, and whether or not someone’s personality is affirmed are much more important for that sensitization than talk about abstract values. Does a hearty breakfast affirm that the child is loved, or is it sent away in the morning with some money for a fatty snack? When it is felt there is a need – as was the case in Britain but it could also have taken place in many other Western countries – to involve Jamie Oliver in order to adjust the tastes of children, something is seriously wrong with the teaching of the proper embodied practices at home. Taste is the manifestation par excellence of habitus. The famous chef had to be called upon in order to teach canteen staff in schools the art of healthy cooking. The hope was that it could change the eating habits of pupils.

It is therefore perhaps not surprising that when people enter new social situations, a new school or new workplace for instance, the existing habitual behaviors and preferences may lead to confusing experiences. Lack of fit and misunderstanding result. What is crucial for social mobility and for a reduction of social lag is the timely recognition of a lack of fit of the habitus. After all, children are smart enough to quickly find connection to other groups, for instance in the streets. They offer a wide variety of exciting opportunities far from discipline and schooling. Without a doubt, truancy is often related to an experienced lack of fit in school, while the a child’s poorly shaped behavioral patterns and experiences fit in with the behavioral patterns of dropouts in the streets.

## The Non-Debate of Structure versus Culture

In the debate about minorities it is often argued that the key issue is not about cultural backwardness but is about socioeconomic, structural disadvantage. This means that the focus is on the people who live in the lowest social strata in appalling circumstances: poor housing conditions, high unemployment areas, an environment with little beauty but lots of rubbish, a community center which often displays a breathtaking ugliness and which is built with minimal architectural effort, absence of cafes and other opportunities for social cohesion and contact. In the terminology of Part One, the arrangements are such that they evoke patterns of conduct that do not match the rest of society. When particularly minorities are affected by such administrative and urban planning negligence, and care for the neighborhood is wanting, the cultural background of the neighborhood residents is often used as an excuse for or as the cause of the general negligence of their public domain. But holding an entire culture responsible ignores the fact that not every member of a minority group is socially disadvantaged nor that she or he necessarily reveals this neglect.

As we have seen, culture is not a force that causes social backwardness. Such a debate is therefore fruitless. This does not mean that a structural deficiency cannot be a characteristic of an intrinsic social group. On the contrary, social backwardness in the lower strata of society is to an important extent the result of ingrained habitual practices. These practices can only be replaced by new and more accurate practices by looking first of all at how structural improvements (e.g., the institutional strengthening of the labor market, social care, and education) can become part of the arrangements within which the new embodied practices become shaped. When backwardness is considered an aggregate feature, however, it may prompt policy documents or research into economic deprivation, but it does not inform us properly about real people's experiences, motivations, or behavioral repertoire. Lamenting the state of the labor market, school dropouts, language deficiency, or a lack of understanding of how society works overlooks the fact that all of this happens to real people in real intrinsic groups. Social backwardness is not simply a structural problem, but is foremost an arrested (i.e., fixed) practice that one cannot simply shed once circumstances improve. To be sure, better conditions are a precondition for positive change, but really profiting from those better conditions is not an automatic consequence. Existing patterns in behavior are often too rigid, and acquired in circumstances that may blur people's perception of new chances and possibilities.

From the perspective of the habitual organization of behavior, the arrangements within which the behavior of the socially disadvantaged youngsters became shaped are very different from the arrangements at the labor market or the school. The body of class and the ethnic body do not catch up easily. It takes the right pressure to be able to adjust to new circumstances. Every good boss can tell you that. Sometimes, it may take an almost military discipline, precisely because body techniques are involved. Getting up early, for instance, is not an act of will alone. It is something that can become automatically activated when practiced, or trained. Embodied practice is also involved in the realization that it is not the done thing to show up at work unkempt and slovenly. It is often up to one's boss to initiate the shaping of such feelings because it is not yet part of the spontaneous repertoire of the new employee. Thus, again, the perspective of the class body, habitus, streamlined emotions and feelings, and automatic behavioral routines requires concrete social arrangements. Without such arranging, the rules and conventions that are omnipresent in school and at the workplace remain powerless phrases.

## **Body and Language**

Like posture and body language, speech is a very efficient means to express and regulate social relationships. Spoken language too is a habitual practice. In "The economy of linguistic exchanges" ([1982]1991) Bourdieu advocates a form of linguistic pragmatism in which (apart from the usual focus on grammatical correctness and the proper use of meaning) expression, speech, accent, dialect, and bodily posture are crucially important as well. Speaking in public is often very difficult, especially for people in the lower classes. If they have to address an elite audience, the task can be even more pressing. The ease with which members of the higher classes use refined expressions that seem to emerge automatically and that display a natural fluency, contrasts sharply with the stammering and stuttering shown by many people from the lower classes, who are unused to public speaking. Linguistic dominance is almost a viral attribute of people in the higher ranks. Their eloquence easily creates situations in which submissive withdrawal competes with anger and the threat of physical force. In this manner, speech and physique are two diametrically opposed practices. Yet, linguistic practice is fully embodied nonetheless. For most Westerners, it is quite common to look at the person one is talking to. Such linguistic mastery can also evoke irritation, envy, or is considered downright provocative by an addressee who is less used to eloquent expression. Those

who have lived in a lower-class milieu are probably familiar with that experience.

## Conclusion

After so much emphasis on persistent patterns, concrete experiences, habitus, and their embedding in the intrinsic social group, the question is how change is possible. Fortunately, people are members of different groups at the same time, certainly today. John Greenwood (1994) advocates the introduction of the term “identitying.” The notion of identity no longer refers to some sort of state but to a collection of identity projects: active efforts to become who you want to be. Identitying is possible because hardly anyone in modern society needs to remain fixed in their own group against their will. School, street, home, leisure, and work all comprise places and arrangements in which the styling of behaviors and experiences can be practiced, in order to fully profit from life in such a modern society. This puts pressure on all the parties involved, however, because what is required is not merely gaining knowledge but above all a sensitization of the body. From that perspective, boundaries of class and ethnicity are there to be broken down in praxis. And this entails training, as much as instruction. Though examples of people failing to participate in the labor market abound, there are also stories of companies or schools where the required training and instruction are practiced successfully. We speculate that these are places where the habitus of the employees or the students is the point of departure. It implies an emphasis on nutrition, exercise, and body techniques. In a good company and at a good school the emphasis is on what people from different backgrounds *do*: how they feel, move, express themselves, and so on. In such an approach, status and ethnicity no longer separate people.

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## Age

### *The Optimal Balance of Love and Challenge*

Youngsters are confronted with the complicated task of becoming part of the adult world, equipped with the necessary qualities and the appropriate motivation to participate fully in an ever-changing world. A large part of growing up is devoted to acquiring such skills and assets. There are many risks and failures on the way. In this chapter, we will peek into the layout of this trajectory, not just for exceptional cases but for young people in general. We will not, however, deal with young people who show severe dysfunctional behavior or commit crime. Before we go into the particulars we set out a few markers.

### **Body and Affect**

Education is generally thought of as primarily a cognitive affair involving all sorts of instruction. Cognitive skills have to be mastered, without a doubt. Yet growing up also involves the literal *incorporation* of youngsters into the adult segments of the population. Their bodies need to be mastered and styled in order to become acceptable members of the adult community. In Part One we argued that feeling and coordinated practice, both acquired in a community of experts, are important means to attain the proper bodily fit that is in concordance with what is common in one's

own group. Agreements, conventions, and arrangements are the preeminent instruments through which belonging, involving the body in all its details, is organized. The development of the appropriate sensitivities and sensibilities is probably more crucial than developing appropriate reasoning and argumentation, since the latter skills apply generally to problem solving in concrete tasks and imply knowledge that is readily available to everyone.<sup>1</sup>

## **The De-particularization of the Body**

In speech humans possess a powerful universalizing instrument. Our physical appearance matters as an expressive device, but speech and talk as such may override the particulars of the body in very efficient ways. We can spiritually bridge the gap with many around us, simply by engaging in communication with each other through language. It is a very efficient means to create communal bonds. The body does not always elicit the appropriate feelings and emotions. More often than not it creates a distance, because human affective reactions are not merely based on deliberation and choice but rather are often instantly present, triggered by the looks of our bodies. All human communities have developed some form of benign dualism in which the body is opposed to the soul, spirit, mind, or psyche – which also allows people to compensate for the restricting and limiting influence of their bodily features.

The presence of our expressive body in everyday life is insurmountable. One cannot do away with it; it cannot be negated; it is always there. Given this importance, the body cannot be ignored. It has to be made acceptable to others in ways that are completely different from those by which opinions and ideas are made acceptable. One's ideas can be at odds with the prevailing view without immediately unleashing negative reactions. Of course, we may anger people with our views if we are unconvincing, but arguing involves others in more distant ways. However, a body that does not meet the group standards immediately draws the attention of others, either because they are appalled or because they are inclined to appreciate it. It involves people's affective life in ways that cannot be argued away. The deviant cannot be ignored.

Therefore, every group invests in means to de-individualize the body, in order to get rid of the uneasy idiosyncracies that interfere with the smooth participation in the activities of a given group. The body needs to be generalized to some extent for better deployment. Staying too particular is risky because then the appropriate emotions and feelings of

others may not be organized, especially in situations of mating or in the creation of other intimate bonds. Little wonder, then, that fashion, the styling of the body through sports, fitness, and sometimes even cosmetic surgery, are extremely important instruments in this process of de-individuation. Making the body acceptable in a much wider and sometimes anonymous circle is of prime importance. Of course, almost everyone wants to be uniquely beautiful, fit, and appealing. Yet it is easy to see that this vast array of means to reshape and restyle the body point to this important aspect of “de-particularization” as well.

The worldwide variety of the technical approaches to universalizing the body is well documented by Robert Brain (1979). In his richly illustrated book, there are many examples of the extremes to which some societies go to incorporate their members. Body painting, tattooing, scarring, and dress codes are but a few examples of tampering with the body’s appearance. Circumcision is another well-known illustration. These techniques contribute to, for example, ritualizing the transition from one age group to another, or facilitating courtship practices. Many techniques are found among the people of elementary or tribal societies. But the typical shaven heads of the Pawnee with, in the middle, strings of hair kept upright by using animal fat, or the clay in the hair of the Massai, certainly inspired the Western punks’ Mohawks as well. The rings and holes in the ears of fashionable Westerners are of no comparison of course to the pierced ears with huge holes in downward hanging lobes, decorated in accordance with tribal style, but they serve the same purpose. They all indicate group membership. The bead of thick scars around the head of the Shilluk or Chollo from southern Sudan differs significantly from the rapier scars (*Schmiss*, in a fight called *Mensur*) on the faces of some elderly prominent Germans, who participated in student duels and whose wounds prove both their manliness as well as their belonging to an old boys’ network. But all these markers signal personal identification with and incorporation in the group. Such bodily measures adapt someone to the conventions and arrangements of a particular social niche. They increase the probability of eliciting the appropriate emotions and feelings on the part of the other group members, and of outsiders as well if they are familiar with the group’s customs.

There are of course means other than scars and scratches to tone down undesirable individual expressions. The bodies of youngsters are fed, dressed, and cared for in accordance with group standards. Parents correct their offspring while they are walking, sitting, standing, or speaking and performing. Peers are likewise involved in the styling and shaping of bodily behavior, sometimes in intense competition with the earlier shaping

of the parents. The peer group often provides a clearly alternative context. In both cases, however, the body is the primary point of application. That is probably the reason why fashion, looks, posture, and music are so important to youth, as they offer distinct ways to express oneself and to align oneself expressively with important others.

The modern Western world no longer has clear initiation rites through which access to the adult world is ritualized. Although this absence hides the importance of bodily involvement, this involvement is still as insurmountable as it is in the tribal world. People in the West are used to the idea that youngsters have to find their way in an educational and psychological jungle, in order to become male or female and to adapt to the standards of the adult world. In this arena, competing views on developmental stages and phases struggle for recognition and endorsement. Much advice is wrapped in technical jargon that loses sight of the bodily skills and practices that are indispensable for appropriate functioning in the adult world. The eight stages of personal development proposed by Erik Erikson, for example, involve successively the establishment of trust, autonomy, moral sense, a concerning attitude, identity, intimacy, motivation to leave something of value to the world, and finally a sense of fulfillment in the last stage of life. His advice for moving properly through the various stages does not contain any reference to bodily skills whatsoever, neither in the sexual domain, nor in the area of interpersonal relationships. It is as if the ego is thought to operate in a void. Others surround the ego, but they are bodiless egos as well. Yet, to be intimate, moral, autonomous, trusting, motivated and so on, requires precisely the presentation of self in everyday life as a person of flesh and blood. Becoming someone is by no means an abstract, mental affair. It always involves concrete, tangible, and expressive bodies (or, better, embodied persons).

By contrast, in elementary societies, the trajectory to be traversed in order to become male or female is not so much marked by educational knowledge but foremost by skills – primarily bodily in nature – that need to be mastered. Formal instruction is unavoidable, of course, but what really counts in the tribe is how certain important assignments are accomplished. How much pain can a young boy endure? How does he behave in cooperative hunting? Will he be brave? Girls are inaugurated in the secrets of the tribe that are related to fertility and to body techniques for giving birth. They are informed about plants with healing power, nutrients that can be found in the forest, and how to prepare healthy food.

In some elementary societies the search for sexual identity is ritualized as well. Boys of the Keraki tribe in New Guinea are expected to eliminate the female element by swallowing the sperm of men with whom they have

spent the night in an initiation rite. Boys are expected to be sexually active with other men, mostly older, in order to become really masculine and be prepared for marriage. The complete male is one who has replaced mother's milk with sperm. This form of ritualized homosexuality is documented in much detail by Gilbert Herdt (1981). He reports the curious fact that some boys had a natural taste for these obligatory homosexual exchanges, but others felt an initial disgust they had to overcome. Yet on the whole, heterosexual identity was not put in jeopardy because of this ritual. Maybe a specific sexual identity had not yet been developed, only male identity in general. Verrier Elwin (1968) describes the friendly youth houses of the Muria in India in which boys and girls practice their male and female roles among each other, up to the most intimate sexual details. The author gives a similar example of the ritualization of identity. The only restriction is not to get pregnant, which incites the young to a greater sexual skill. In this case, personal sexual identity seems not to be at stake either. That is to say, it is not at stake in the bothersome way in which sexual play of whatever kind quickly leads to identity problems in the West. What the tribal youngsters are concerned with is to learn how to practice certain sexual skills and how to pay attention to the shaping of experiences as ordained by the tribe.

Young people's identity projects in the West are intertwined with group-bound proceedings and scenarios as well, but these comprise a rather abstract integration that extends to a myriad of social demands. These are certainly not articulated in regard to the scripting of the youngsters' sexual identity. This latter "project" is thoroughly psychologized, and whatever sexual practice is involved, it takes place in a secure and private world of the peer group, generally completely divorced from the parental world. The only notable exception may be in the circles of the higher classes where the family openly supervises courtship practices, most often because of the (financial and social) interests that are at stake still. But even here the sexual requirements are not explicitly specified.

The public side of achieving identity is closely related to the school or job environment. For example, a child born in a lower-class group is not likely to go to university or to become a scientist. That has little to do with the child's intellectual capacities, as we will see later on. It is, however, much more common in such social circles to enter the job market at a very early age in order to make money as soon as possible. This of course has important consequences for the way in which personal identity develops. These choices go together with a very definite outfit, concise behavioral styles, distinctive bodily comportment, and group-bound rituals. Young people of this class go out to certain places, bars rather than restaurants or

theatre or opera, and take part in the other practices that are conventionalized and arranged in the own group. These practices create isolated educational avenues. In the Netherlands, for instance, the government has tried to blur class boundaries by creating a so-called “middle school.” This was intended to counter the class-based school selection of previous times. It turned out to be a fiasco. Currently, about 60 percent of Dutch youngsters attend schools that do not prepare them for further or higher education. The relationship between immediate gratification in terms of earnings and work is kept intact in these forms of education. It has added to the division between lower and higher educated people that characterizes present-day Dutch society. This again reflects what we argued in the previous chapter on class: such a central division between the elite and groups at the bottom of society fosters the proliferation of means of identity attainment that keep both segments of society hermetically closed to each other from an early age onwards.

### **Including the Young in the Order of Adults: Attachment and Stimulation**

Scientific study of childhood and adolescent development has resulted in two central themes. The first focuses on the way in which love is managed in the family and attachment is established between the child and its prime caregiver. The second emphasizes the way in which the child’s capacities are assessed and stimulated. These themes are sufficiently corroborated empirically to serve as conceptual tools for the understanding of the elaborated incorporation of the young into the world of adults. Every community in whatever society has to provide a sufficient embedding of the young in the loving care provided by adults. It is a hard fact of developmental psychology that, without love, the pathway to adult life will be unnecessarily difficult. As we will see, love is foremost a communal practice and not merely a private sentiment. At the same time, the love economy involves the concise assessment of the abilities of young people. Love ought not to blind us to the necessity of presenting the young with clear expectations. Being too protective interferes with the necessary distance that is indispensable for a demanding involvement, instead of just leniency and indifference. Youngsters need to attain the appropriate motivation to take part in modern society. This is again a responsibility of the group in which the young are embedded. Abilities always require training, which in turn can only be realized by proper motivation, triggered once more by the

group members within the environment of the youngsters. There is no isolated individual pathway to development.

### Attachment

Virtually all developmental psychologists will agree on the importance of secure attachment. More than a half-century ago, William Blatz, Mary Ainsworth, and John Bowlby initiated research into forms of attachment between (primarily) mother and child. This has developed into the most prospective program in developmental psychology, well corroborated by detailed empirical research. Initially, Blatz investigated the exploration behavior of little boys. He discovered that boys exploit the wider environment in a relaxed fashion as soon as they get the opportunity to safely move away, step by step, from the mother. An abrupt separation from the mother was counterproductive, and a repeated anxiety-producing separation was outright hazardous. This finding called for providing boys with proper stimulation during their upbringing. Ainsworth enriched the program by including girls in the study of the exploratory behavior of children, something Blatz had probably overlooked because of the sex bias of the day.

Ainsworth, living in Uganda at the time, noticed how safe little babies felt on the backs of their mothers or sisters, skin on skin, enjoying the proximity of the adult's body. She devised the well-known "strange situation test" to determine casually and in natural circumstances the quality of the attachment of boys and girls alike. The test is still used today as a powerful instrument with a clear procedure. A child of about a year or year and a half is brought into contact with a stranger and is subsequently separated, twice and very briefly, from the familiar caregiver, which in most cases is the mother. When the caregiver returns, three types of reactions are possible: (1) the child is glad to see her and crawls immediately towards her, (2) the child hesitates and seems to think it over, and finally (3) the child remains motionless for quite a while. These behavioral responses reveal respectively (1) secure attachment, (2) ambivalent attachment, and (3) insecure attachment – which involves insufficient coping with stress.

Bowlby (1969–1982) summarized this research program as an attempt to bring psychoanalysis and ethology together in one single developmental theory. The idea that attachment is evolutionarily important was put forward in the late 1950s by Harry Harlow, the psychologist who became famous because of his well-known experiments involving rhesus monkeys growing up with a "mother" made of iron or one made of soft wool.



Monkeys who could only creep onto the iron mother developed all sorts of aberrations. A nourishing and cherishing treatment by the mother or prime caretaker is indispensable for healthy development. It certainly applies to human beings.

The entire research program on attachment involves important obligations of the caregivers. This is true of all times, of course, but what we like to emphasize is not simply the indispensability of secure attachment. Rather, we want to point to its embeddedness in communal behavioral patterns and practices. We will do so after having presented the second theme.

### The stimulation optimum

Families and the wider community seeking to incorporate their youngsters have to find a proper balance between on the one hand loving and caring on the basis of proper closeness, and on the other hand providing challenging stimulation on the basis of a necessary distance. Sufficient distance is required in order to motivate children to get as much out of themselves as possible. Not only a caressing hand is needed but a guiding one as well. Next to love, fostering the necessary cognitive and affective abilities of children is decisive for their effective functioning in society. Aptitude results to an important extent from motivating youngsters properly in order to deploy their abilities in the best possible way.

In 1994 Richard Herrnstein and Charles Murray's book *The Bell Curve* adopted (again) quite a gloomy perspective on the split between the upper strata of society and the bottom. The authors argued that people at the top were endowed with the proper cognitive abilities and skills to enable them to function well in society. Contrarily, at the bottom of society were groups of deprived people who were missing out on the connection with modern society. This book did not emphasize some sort of "learned helplessness" as we encountered in Theodore Dalrymple's argument in Chapter 5. Herrnstein and Murray identified hereditary intelligence as the sole factor responsible for this social division. According to the authors, because intelligence is for a large part hereditary, which implies that it is primarily a biological fact, the mating pattern of people in the upper strata is to a large extent responsible for the maintenance of their privileged position. By the same mechanism, the members of the lower strata are kept in place as well. This section of society is ruled by insufficient cognitive capacities, which are supposed to be equally biologically fixed and immune to change because of the mating patterns in this section of society. The book explains that social intervention programs remain ineffective

because environmental provisions run counter to the hereditary nature of cognitive capacities as measured by the so-called “Intelligence Quotient” (IQ). Between 40 and 80 percent of IQ is inherited. Apart from the fact that this still leaves up to 60 percent to non-hereditary influences, the points made in this book are quite clear: the single individual is left to his or her genes and the barrier they create is insurmountable.

Public discussion of these matters always leads to heated debates about whether human nature or environmental arrangements (nature or nurture) are the prime drivers of human development. As we saw in Part One, throughout modern times the intellectual community has been trying to convince people that nature is the only thing that really matters. This is also the cheapest solution to social problems, leaving the burden of aptness and adaptation to the natural endowment of isolated individuals. Of course, the natural or biological endowment and its hereditary nature are very important at all levels of human functioning. Yet, what is equally if not more decisive is the way in which existing behavioral patterns and arrangements in the intrinsic social group contribute to the individual’s coordination of behavior. A fundamental question is whether the group provides sufficient stimulation to its young members. Such stimulation is an unobtrusive yet preeminent influence in the triggering of proper behavior. Existing stimulation patterns in the behavior of one’s own group members, for example, can boost motivation in interplay with biological (including genetic) endowment. We now return in greater detail to the two major themes of this chapter.

## **The Cultural Framing of Closeness and Distance**

What is primarily at stake in the world of the young is an optimal closeness to others, both with respect to the parents or caretakers but also with respect to members of the peer group. Without love, friendship, and affection things usually do not work out well. The emotional sensitivity for these experiences has to be established at a very young age. The arranging of love is of crucial importance, in terms of an early secure attachment to the parents or caregivers, and also in terms of the proper stimulation of the child at a later age. This latter issue is often overlooked in the conceptualization of attachment and its importance for the proper development of the child. Usually, the focus is on the individual family – if that word should be used at all, since the supportive unit is not always a family anymore. Yet, families or other units are rarely seen as part of a wider community, let alone that the behavioral patterns in the family are con-

nected to the wider social environment in which these families operate. By focusing on this connection it becomes clear that attachment is also a matter of the intrinsic social group to which the family belongs.

Let us outline what this involves. A boy who initially does well at school may gradually get stuck in a downward spiral. As a result, his prospects of a higher education and brighter future quickly decline. Boys in particular are often quite sensitive to what their fellow classmates think. They often seek the support of their peers in order to resist parental pressure. If there is no competing alliance, either in the form of peers who take pride in doing well at school or in the form of a supportive club in which extracurricular activities are organized, the boy's struggle against the downward motivational spiral becomes very hard. In many cases the family remains powerless. Support for school-related accomplishments needs to be organized artificially to supplement the safe attachment and stimulation of the primal family group. For girls, the situation is different. Once in school, the behavioral patterns in female peer groups center much more around academic achievement and societal responsibility, due to girls taking on a caring role, which women have in all domains and to which men are much less inclined. Yet, in many cases academic achievement is to no avail. Encouraging women to enter the workforce again requires artificial support from an entirely different source. If, for example, other parents in the neighborhood frown upon leaving one's child to the care of others in a daycare center, women are discouraged from entering the job market. The pressure in the intrinsic social group can be immense. Moreover, what is typically lacking in such a case is stimulation by organized supplementary help and support, providing for sufficiently sensitive niches in which the child can grow up. To emphasize women's indispensability for the job market at the expense of a loving environment for the child is to deny the importance of the right balance between care and challenge.

### Attachment and the framing of feeling

Sometimes in psychology experiments are conducted which result in serendipitous findings that turn out to be of great importance. Such a fortuitous event happened to Marianne Riksen-Walraven, professor of developmental psychology at Radboud University in the Netherlands. More than 30 years ago she experimented with nine- to twelve-month-old babies who underwent a stimulating treatment by the parents, as part of a research project into cognitive development at a very early age. Under

the supervision of the research team, the mothers or caregivers read stories to their babies and made them play with toys that were specially selected to stimulate exploratory behavior. The overall aim of the experiment was to help the parents in coordinating their behavior with respect to their toddlers, in such a way that, unobtrusively and automatically, behaviors would be elicited that were expected to have a lasting effect on the children's cognitive abilities. The question was whether it was possible to produce greater competence, simply by means of structuring interaction with children in a richer and more challenging way. It was proven empirically that stimulation indeed had this effect. Years later, the researchers hit upon a much more surprising finding, however. A test conducted when the children were about 12 years old revealed a surprisingly strange resilience among the group that earlier underwent this stimulating treatment. They were better at regulating their feelings and emotional impulses, reacted more calmly to stress, and were overall much more capable of adapting to new circumstances. The effects noted had, it was later realized, already been noticeable after the family visits during the first phase of the project.

This rather unexpected finding could be accounted for by, and be seen in line with, neurological research into the orbitofrontal cortex. A well-coordinated and properly tuned interaction between the child and parent has important effects on the development of the orbitofrontal cortex. The building of proper neural tracks is a precondition for an appropriate regulation of affective behavior. Intensive affective communication stimulates the development of the limbic system into a system intertwined with control through the orbitofrontal cortex, which is absolutely necessary for proper social functioning in terms of stamina, sensibility, and social defense. Indeed, brain structures are involved in everything people do. "We are our brain," as the Dutch brain researcher Dick Swaab (2010) phrased it in his popular book of the same title. But this message points to only one part of the story. We argued earlier that feelings as ideational phenomena become shaped in properly tuned relationships. Only in interactive relationships, in which a child can really *sense* the involvement of the caregiver, is the necessary feeling for others and also for one's own ego shaped. Only in this way is the crucial brain machinery started up and implemented. No matter what innate behavioral inclinations are installed in someone's mental makeup as a result of the complex formation of the male and female brain, without properly embedding these structures in a stimulating and eliciting social environment, no proper shaping of behavior will take place. Developmental biologists and psychologists continue to warn that there is a critical period in which such brain structures need to be stimulated. It cannot be done at any time. Without devising full-fledged stimulating

circumstances, and without challenging the array of genetically constructed inclinations, abilities, and aptitudes, individual development remains truncated and incomplete. Many well-known stories of so-called “feral” children testify to this fact. Humans cannot do without meticulously constructed stimulating circumstances, which invoke direct communal responsibilities.

It is especially this latter aspect that is supported by Riksen-Walraven’s experiment. It is very important for a baby in the critical period, particularly around the twelfth month (plus or minus a few weeks), to experience in concrete and tangible forms the effects of its own behavior on others. Only in this way will the very young child get a feeling for others and for the appropriate reactions. For instance, what may start as a rather fortuitous sequence of events (e.g., the baby cries and the adult caregiver reacts with consoling gestures, drawing its attention, and playing with the baby to comfort it) develops through such conscious stimulation into the acute experience of being the source of action and reaction. That is the starting point of developing self-confidence, on the basis of the experienced competence and awareness that one is an active agent. Once this initial feeling becomes embedded in a much more elaborated coordination of behaviors, the awareness of one’s efficacy becomes gradually richer and more refined. The continuous communication through facial expression, gestures, and the raising of one’s voice unleashes metabolic energy, which is crucial for the building of the proper cerebral pathways. This neurological evidence cannot be ignored. The crucial metabolism is interlocked with the caregivers’ behavioral patterns. No neural machinery, or any other part of a human body, operates in a void. Again, the trick is to search for an optimum instead of an unqualified emphasis on (this time) crude and imprecise environmental influences. Peaks of energy need to be interchanged with lows in tension, with relaxation and evenness; otherwise the circuits in the cortex may become damaged.

In sum: It is quite clear that attachment involves subtle mechanisms of care and attention. Appropriate mutual coordination of behavior is indispensable in this critical period when essential competences are imprinted on the child. If the child turns away frequently from its caregivers or if it locks itself up in its own inner world, it should be noted immediately. Otherwise it will have alarming effects on its neurological structures and their development in this critical phase of the child’s life. To view it as a transient, accidental reaction or as merely a peculiarity of the child’s character could be dramatically wrong. This proves again that the intrinsic social group is of extreme importance. The wider group can be stimulating, but also obstructing in the sense that it can keep the parents from

being too close and stimulating, for instance by emphasizing the spoiling influences of love and care. Such productive and counterproductive interference can be observed everywhere.

In the nature–nurture debate, “environment” is generally conceptualized in a very crude and imprecise way. Sometimes it is conceived of in terms of social context or culture without elaborating its precise form. Riksen-Walraven, for example, uses the very child-centric attitude of the Beng people in the Ivory Coast to illustrate her case for attentive care. This cultural group attributes to their babies a special skill in understanding all languages of the world. They have acquired this skill in the land of the dead in which they learned to speak all the languages of their forefathers. Only when the child receives proper care, so the Beng reason, will it focus on the language of the community to which it belongs. That is a beautiful story, which above all illustrates the way in which the Beng people take responsibility for organizing the necessary care and attention for their offspring. That is also precisely the point: such a story obliges every member of the local group to give the appropriate care and attention to children. It should therefore be understood as an arranging behavioral pattern, and not so much as a general cultural asset or value. A comparable focus is arranged on the island of Bali. This time, the form is not a narrative about language, but the portraying of a baby as some sort of god who needs to be surrounded by all possible care and affection. In this way, again, the child receives all the love it needs. What we should take from this proto-scientific awareness of the necessary affect and stimulation is that these mothers and the wider community do display the required patterns of behavior that the child needs so much.

*Arranging the care* After this discovery of the critical phase in which the orbitofrontal cortex should be stimulated, Riksen-Walraven drew some important consequences. She asked for a little more concern for this crucial and critical first-year period. She pointed out that the attention of caregivers should be qualitatively very high, not only at home but also in daycare centers. She doubted whether that was the case and she criticized the economic priority that was given in most modern societies to the participation of women in the workforce at the expense of their parental role. She doubted whether sufficient professionalism could be created in daycare centers. The subtle mechanisms that were displayed in the neurological research into attachment required subtle interaction, which she thought could be better realized at home, or else a clear set

of requirements should be articulated which childcare workers should have.

The response to her criticism was cool. Riksen-Walraven was reproached for discouraging mothers to take on a societal role outside the house. Allegedly, she wanted to push women back into the received role of housewife and caregiver. Yet, her only point was that a good one-on-one relationship with the child should not be neglected, especially if economic motives tend to prevail over relational ones. If one leaves the responsibility for creating such a vitally important stimulating relationship with children to professionals, the question should be: How can we challenge these professionals to live up to the high demands placed on the attention that should be paid to little children, according to the outcomes of Riksen-Walraven's research?

The sharp reactions of the public, and the indignation that followed the suggestion that stringent criteria for care and interaction should be formulated, showed that a sensitive chord had been struck. The professor's remarks were not intended to put an entire professional group on trial, however. There is no reason to think that daycare cannot meet the standards she required. Moreover, many parents fail to meet the needs of their children, to be sure. The aim of the remarks was to alert politicians and the general public alike to the fact that a caring attitude towards little children involves much more than just money and organization. Suitable arrangements do not come out of the blue. It requires, among other things, the devising of proper toys, stimulating reading material, and a caring atmosphere in which these aids can be deployed properly. It involves care that is tailored to the individual needs of the child, instead of just a general scheme for every child, as is often the case. It also requires bodily contact without the danger of sexualizing the relationship.

In the family, the risk of incestuous relationships generally prevents a sexualization of the close bond between caregiver and child. But in daycare centers this is quite a different matter. How precarious this can be is demonstrated every once in a while by events such as the sex scandal in an Amsterdam daycare center in the spring of 2011. Extreme professionalization is required in these cases. It is the only way to ward off the risk of sexualizing the relationship. Such scandals also indicate how much the wider community is in fact implicated. As we saw in Chapter 4, in the West human sexual behavior has no appealing public image by means of which the senses can be calibrated. This creates a harmful neglect of the needs of children for acceptable ways in which their sexual feelings can find their proper place. Adults need to be involved, not as obtrusive sexual



partners but as sensitive caregivers. In that regard, sex cannot simply be ignored. Otherwise it will open the way for hidden abuse and assault. A responsible community would see to it that there is a proper way of dealing with sex in relation to the young.

In the West in general, most people think that bringing up children happens predominantly in the intimate environment of the family. That is not true at all. In the family, behavioral patterns manifest themselves that are clearly acquired in the group surrounding the nuclear group of father, mother, and child or children. The sloppy and careless attitude of some parents towards their children often has its origin in the way the neighborhood is organized, or the kind of people one is surrounded with. If the arrangements are those of decay, that is, if the neighborhoods are dirty, violent, and harsh, it is difficult to maintain proper standards in relating to the child. If the focus remains on the family only, without involving the wider intrinsic social group and the arrangements within which it operates, the tuning of the senses and the establishment of the proper feelings will remain impaired. The involvement of intrinsic social groups is important for many other reasons. For example, when it comes to pointing out how modern and advanced Turkey is, reference is made to the high percentage of women in the academic workforce and in big business – especially so when compared to the percentage of women in Western business and academic careers. However, as we pointed out before, a closer look at the reason for these exceptional statistics reveals the effect of some astonishing environmental arrangements designed by the men in charge. As we noted, in the intrinsic social group of Turkish men, there is still no place for a caring role in the sense that they leave work early and take responsibility for childcare at home. Women, therefore, are allowed to skip meetings and to rearrange their workloads so that they can be at home in time for the children to return from school. That is why they are so conspicuously present in firms and academia. It is again the wider intrinsic social group that provides the necessary support for women to give children proper care and attention.

*Care as body technique* On Bali and among the Beng people, as well as in all other parts of the world, building a proper relationship with children at a very early age is about attunement of behavioral coordination and feelings. The typical Balinese expertise has nothing to do with turning their babies skillfully into deities, nor is the expertise of the Beng their child-centric and child-friendly linguistic theory. These are just narratives to bring about the required care. The actual expertise is to be

found in the domain of spontaneous body techniques and body practices. This aspect of caregiving is a highly sensitive matter in the Western world. The male and female nurses in care centers must show proper professional behavior in a domain that is conspicuously reserved for the mother. Even the children's own parents are not always very skilled in that respect. As many sad sex scandals with children and caregivers demonstrate, the professional care that is required is a very delicate matter.

The importance of tactile involvement in the child-caretaker relationship was suggested to Mary Ainsworth (1967) by observing the skin-to-skin contact of Ugandan mothers. Like many anthropologists before her, she was impressed by the way little girls cared for their sisters and brothers by carrying them on the hip. To always have this close contact provided the child with enough safety to explore the world away from the mother. It was the quality of this type of care that struck Mary Ainsworth. Of course, the romanticism of the image is not what concerns us here, but it is obvious that in the West, people do not carry their children around so close to the body. That is, apart from a number of parents, including fathers, who use baby slings. It implies that caregivers have to look for other means to calibrate the children's senses and to develop their proper feelings. It is a shame that this theme of bodily involvement in the care for little children is almost exclusively touched upon in the context of sex scandals. The language of care is very abstract in the West, notoriously asexual, with almost no reference to the body at all. Baby massage or similar techniques for toddlers are often met with defensive overreaction by professional caregivers and teachers, probably to stay away as far as possible from any allusions to intimacy or sexual feelings. What is lost, however, is not only a proper balance between bodily involvement and distance in interactions with the child, but also an opportunity to create a role model for children in order to teach them how to deal with their own body and intimacy in a healthy way.

To be sure, artificially designing the necessary bodily techniques and bodily practices around attachment and the development of the emotional and affective life is quite a challenge in a modern society. To search for an optimum is a very delicate matter. Too much bodily contact can work against a proper bond, but too little contact is even more damaging. In case of too much bodily involvement, there is always the awkward risk that adult sexual needs will spoil the establishment of a safe bond. And on the other hand, the very young child is not equipped to compensate for a lack of closeness. Later in life, comparison with and in most cases proper treatment by others can only partly compensate for a lack of

intimacy in the first years of life, before language and cognition enable compensatory measures.

The baby is built to be fondled and caressed, so to speak. It is quite natural to give it the tangible feeling that it is wanted and desired. Evolutionary evidence shows that the female face retains some childish features in order to elicit caring reactions from men. The body of the little baby triggers quite naturally a special voice and talk, tender gestures, a loving smile, and protective reactions. If this is not the case, the adults involved are most probably suffering from pathology or traumatizing experiences around their own intimacy. It is also well known that in circumstances of serious deprivation, mothers do not develop the proper caring sentiments and practices with respect to their babies. In this way, they protect themselves from the unfortunate possibility that the child will not survive its difficult living conditions. Moreover, in today's societies day-to-day hassles can thwart the spontaneous development of a caring bond too. These are by no means exceptions, and they often result in unsafe and ambivalent attachment. This again demonstrates that care needs to be responsibly and diligently arranged and supported in the social group.

Adequate affective behavior and its warm, bodily expression become even more difficult during puberty and early adolescence. Even at this age, sons and daughters need the loving and sensitive care of adults. Affectionate bodily involvement is even more precarious in this phase of life than in any other, particularly with respect to boys. The more they are hugged, the more defensive they tend to become. Here we meet the Western sexual syndrome at its worst. Behavioral patterns in the wider community form a real obstruction to a proper bodily involvement. Incest and paedophilia have burdened the task of developing proper skills and practices. The aberrations of a few spoil what really is a need for all. To generate the proper feelings, against the tendency to exclude the body as much as possible, is impossible without support from the wider community. The lamentable public image of sex we encountered in Chapter 4 is to a large extent responsible for difficulties in arranging this support.

*The difficult balance of intimacy and distance* To establish a balance between closeness and distance is an absolute requirement for a healthy educational climate. Without proper distance it is impossible to demand something, or to bring the youngster to the right disciplinary attitude. For if one is too close, as is for example the case when adults confront youngsters with their own sexual desires, one can be manipulated easily. Strict-

ness and discipline are robbed of their effectiveness if one shows one's own vulnerability. Yet distancing oneself runs the risk of appearing too cold and reserved. It is counterproductive as well. On this score, again the intrinsic social group and its expertise are mandatory. In rural communities that still are present in for instance modern Turkey, Morocco or Mexico, the tasks for the youngsters are set, the inaugural protocol for training and mastering the proper expertise is comprised in initiation rites, or in a strict division of labor between men and women. The two worlds are well defined. This implies that the transition from childhood into adolescence and the adult world is a matter of understanding how things are laid out and ordered in space.

In Morocco, for example, the street is for the men, young and old, while the house is the domain of the women. Public space is the men's playground, which women can only traverse. Love and care are predominantly the women's business. Boys learn outside the house what real life is about. Women remain associated with the warm, cozy atmosphere at home. The father is predominantly an authoritarian figure. In many countries in southern Europe a similar pattern holds. Contrarily, in northern Europe and North America, other elements are at play. Fathers tend to burden the relationship with their sons with the missed chances they had themselves, so that the son has to live up to the expectations of the father. It causes the twisted and distorted relationships that figure so prominently in American fiction. Many plots involve the "blessing of the father" motif. Todd Gitlin's *Sacrifice* (1999) and Nick Flynn's *Another Bullshit Night in Suck City* (2004) are about a conflict-ridden relationship between father and son in which the son ultimately expects the father to give his blessing to the way the son wants to live. Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman* (1964) is a classic play about the same theme. What is at stake here is no longer attachment or the primal affective relationship with the caregiver, nor a splitting up of the world into a male and a female realm each with their own affective requirements, but rather a well-balanced masculine affective bond between men.

Thus, the delicate balance between distance and closeness is difficult to achieve and depends on the wider communal environment, which differs from group to group. In the Netherlands, for example, the family is often the only source for providing social bonding. This can become such a burden that a failure to achieve a proper balance is very difficult to repair. In some cases, the emotional economy can be completely destroyed by unsafe attachment and by later miscommunication. In other societies, too much family support in the face of a failure on the part of the child to,

for example, do well in school can result in defensive behavior that undermines proper challenge. The social skills are then quickly put under such an immense pressure that the child's mental health is threatened. The solution by professionals is generally found in Prozac rather than Adidas, as David Servan-Schreiber (2004) has termed it. As soon as pills and medicine take the place of doing things together in order to find the right balance – whereby the sport shoes are the symbol of cooperative action – something is seriously wrong. Following Antonio Damasio in his emphasis on the affective life and the resilience of the human mental machinery in the context of proper tuning and calibration, Servan-Schreiber's plea amounts to giving the community a responsible place in personal development.

## Talent and Motivation

We now turn to the second important theme, which is the interplay between talent and motivation. Its importance is aptly documented in Malcolm Gladwell's very successful popular book *Outliers*. In chapters on famous ice hockey players and computer freaks who became billionaires, Gladwell shatters the received view that inborn talent is all that counts in getting ahead in life. He relates the many, many hours Bill Gates spent behind a computer during his education. He and his friends spent more than eight hours a day, seven days a week, in 1971 on an ISI mainframe at the University of Washington. Besides his talent, what certainly counts as well is that he had an unusual opportunity to work on something he really wanted. In 1968 he had the opportunity to program a computer. In his sophomore year at high school he had access to the mainframe computer in downtown Seattle through membership of a computer club. Gladwell gives many more examples of circumstances that contribute to the development of certain capacities and inclinations. He wants to minimize the role of what can be called "secular predestination," that is to say, the role of genetic endowment or talent as the sole or at least the most important determinant of one's fate. His book is anecdotal and wraps his message in a convincing form: famous hockey players, computer nerds, and even exceptionally gifted people all have to have opportunities and communal support. If that is not arranged somehow, a high IQ or a special talent may remain unfulfilled.

In 1998, Michael Howe, Jane Davidson, and John Sloboda published a much talked about article, "Innate talents: Reality or myth?" It can be used in support of Gladwell's anecdotal presentation. Talent is not the

crucial factor in superior performance, according to these authors. Talent is seldom the determining factor. It is a misconception that exceptional cognitive or artistic accomplishments can be accounted for by invoking some underlying exceptional talent. The authors call this kind of explanation the “talent account.” They claim that the talent account is widespread in educational circles. That is also the main concern of their polemic article. The authors start by presenting a definition of what the talent account entails. It is based on clear evidence of inborn qualities stemming from various sources. The undisputed source of evidence is of course stories about exceptionally gifted people, and of so-called *idiots savants*. Examples like Kim Peek, the model for Raymond in Barry Levinson’s famous movie *Rain Man*, readily appeal to someone’s imagination. This appeal probably comes from the way in which such exceptional skills somehow suggest that others may have them in a more moderate form. These cases are fascinating, of course, but obviously are also very rare. Another source of evidence for the existence of talent, as such, are the well-documented exceptional accomplishments of small children who compose music, write novels, make paintings, finish high school before their age mates, speak a third or fourth language, and solve complicated mathematical problems, all at a very young age. A third source, finally, is found in special biological features of the brain. Some brain characteristics correlate highly with exceptional performances, such as left-handedness, hemispheric laterality, and skills like a photographic memory. Biological sex differences are correlated with brain features and special talents as well.

Howe and colleagues propose five strong preconditions for the talent account. (1) First and foremost the talent account is about something innate; (2) it is about something that manifests itself at a very early age; and (3) early enough to make predictions about manifestations of excellence in later life; (4) the qualities are rare and exceptional; (5) the talent is domain-specific, which implies that it manifests itself in areas of great skill, for example sports, mathematics, language, or music. The authors claim that, given these restrictions, talent is exceptional and very uncommon. So uncommon that if so-called talented or gifted children are compared to normal children, the differences can almost always be attributed to ideal circumstances, ongoing training, stimulation by the parents, and other rather special environmental arrangements. It is important, for example, that children become exposed to certain stimuli at a young age. When there is a social environment in which it is customary to often make music, one may expect an alleged “musical talent.” In other cases, making music is perhaps not in the behavioral repertoire of the parents as they

have other priorities. Making music may not be considered important. The question is therefore whether there is sufficient incentive to develop or encourage certain skills. It is also important that certain efforts or practices can become habitual. Otherwise, there has to be continuous pressure on the apprentice. Most of the musical abilities in families can be explained by invoking such factors. The genetic contribution mainly has to do with a combination of fairly mundane inherited features, as we will argue below. Critical, however, is the encouragement that the child encounters. We conclude that it is above all the primary group and the community that is important. Within this group, it is established how a person can excel. Against such a background we will also look at intelligence, because that notion is often wrongly regarded as a matter of talent too.

### IQ in society

The concept of intelligence is quite complicated in modern society. In the United States great importance is attached to it because by tradition intelligence is associated with essential features of modern citizenship. That had already become apparent early in the twentieth century. When in 1921 the citizens of the United States were startled by the ominous finding that US Army recruits had an average mental age of someone approximately 13 years old, this was perceived as an indication that something was seriously wrong with the population. A number of years earlier, during World War I, soldiers were recruited by means of an intelligence test. This was partially done to experiment with the test. But in fact all that it was used for was the promotion of test psychology. The test was intended as a selection instrument and, although many recruits were tested, the results were not really used for getting the right man in the right place. Eventually, the advice of superiors was decisive in assessing the soldiers' capacities and skills in much more detail, and assigning them a position. But when in 1921 the results of the intelligence testing in the US Army became known to the public, the damage was done. People assumed that the results reflected the mental capacities of a cross-section of the American male population. Could a country still function with such low talent on such a large scale?

Of course, some people questioned the measurements. Was there really a reliable way to measure something as complex as intelligence? The American journalist Walter Lippmann was harshly critical. He argued (1922) in the magazine *The New Republic* that the measurements were inaccurate. Was the testing really about intelligence as a cognitive capac-



ity? Was intelligence a feature that is unrelated to the amount of knowledge one had already gained in one's family or social milieu? Lippmann thought the tests were actually educational performance tests and not instruments to determine the level of one's cognitive abilities as such. In his view, the lamented low intelligence was a proof of a lousy school system and one that barely reached parts of the male population. Lippmann disputed that the intelligence measure was about an innate and stable property of individuals. The debate in the United States subsequently moved in the direction of arguing that the cognitive abilities of black Americans were lower than those of white Americans. This caused a disagreement with the scientists of culture. Franz Boas in particular maintained that there were no racial differences in terms of intellectual capacity (see Chapter 2). There were apparently large social differences, but there was no such thing as biological superiority or inferiority.

Remarkably, the drama surrounding the cognitive capacities of recruits and races was repeated toward the end of the twentieth century. As we noted above, Hernstein and Murray (1994) again argued that poorly developed intelligence would cause problems in the lower segments of society. The people involved were thought to be unable to keep up with modern developments and demands in society. Because of this, they would give up their efforts and thus present a danger, as they would easily fall prey to unemployment and abuse of alcohol and other drugs. To make things even worse, they would behave irresponsibly with respect to their own children. IQ and morality go together, was the message once again. Although the controversy surrounding IQ in the United States may be a typical consequence of the importance attached to talent and measurable fitness, in Europe too one often encounters the idea that there are people with exceptional aptitude, who should be saved from contamination by ordinary people. However, young people in Europe are not always streamed in rigid learning routes on the basis of an aptitude test, as is common in the United States (American College Testing, Scholastic Assessment Test). Nonetheless, the idea that talent is fixed and that this justifies early career planning is also very persistent in Western Europe. It is precisely this emphasis on a predefined talent that keeps professionals from monitoring closely the motivational arrangements in the group.

*An optimum again* We need not quarrel about the innate characteristics of certain capacities, in particular intelligence. But it would be wrong to think about this predisposition simplistically in terms of a single gene that determines aptitude once and for all. The genetic basis of intelligence almost certainly includes a variety of properties, each of which is to an

important extent genetically determined without a doubt. It involves properties that almost everyone has to some degree, such as an optimal balance between attention and concentration, a good memory, and also a fast metabolism in order not to sink away in lethargy like Oblomov in the famous novel by Ivan Goncharov (1859). A good ratio between being alert and being relaxed, a certain temperament, and a physique that requires little extra care and attention are important as well. They all have to do with a person's biological equipment. Is she or he able to sit still and concentrate for a while, and is this person able to cope emotionally with major and minor setbacks? In general these physical properties are of importance, although it is of course possible to find counter-examples of highly intelligent people who are corpulent, anxious, or physically handicapped.

The important point to make is that, with respect to intelligence, it is probably not a single attribute but a series of attributes that are involved. Each is partially inherited but only their interplay and their interactions with a stimulating social environment can lead to exceptional results. For instance, members of a musical family may be blessed with a set of inherited attributes, each of which may be fairly common: the form of the fingers, muscle tone, motor agility, temperament type, concentration, and so on. But without an embedding in the family that organizes attention and provides the opportunities to practice a lot within a community of skilled others, few results may be expected. The perspective proposed here regarding the importance of an optimal interplay between a person's special characteristics and a stimulating environment is intended to correct some persistent misconceptions.

Criticizing the talent account has also opened our eyes to the importance of compensation. If a youngster is not good at mathematics, this does not necessarily mean that he or she is missing the talent. Clear instruction and allowing for more time can compensate for his or her lack of quick insight and focused drive. So-called talent and its genetic base is often the result of a fortunate mix of features that everybody possesses to a greater or lesser degree. The special form of concentration that seems to distinguish some pupils from others, the exceptional memory that some have, the ability to focus instead of fidget, all point to a mixture of genetically determined special factors that come together in the intelligent mind. But, just as a person who does not have a right hand can learn to write with the left hand, even though it will always show, so a mind that is not as proficient in arithmetic can be compensated for by giving the person more time and structure. This will also show, of course. The important

point to be made is that compensation is a communal affair. It depends on the way the school, for example, allows more time in accomplishing a task or provides more assistance and detailed instruction, if the task requires it. Appropriate support often results in an acceptable performance; it may be slower and a bit more laborious but that doesn't point to a genetic defect or, conversely, in cases where these extra provisions are not needed, to a special talent. The talent account often points in the wrong direction. It sets the wrong standard and blocks inventiveness. It makes the majority of the learning community suffer because of what is expected of or attributed to the gifted.

### Motivation is crucial

Apart from the fact that compensation and a multifaceted view of intelligence suggest that provisions may help everyone and not just the happy few, it also becomes clear that intelligence as such is not a single attribute or clear-cut aptitude but a composite in which many genetic or biological features work together and require appropriate circumstances to flourish. The genetic base of intelligence comprises several properties or assets available to almost everybody. There are many points of application or action. Without training and practice in a group of experts none of these assets will develop into a full-fledged intelligence. Howe and colleagues (1998: 409) summarize it as follows:

Large amounts of regular practice were found to be essential for excelling. Studies of long-term practice and training suggest that individual differences in learning-related experiences are a major source of the variance in achievement. The evidence we have surveyed in this target article does not support the talent account, according to which excelling is a consequence of possessing innate gifts. This conclusion has practical implications, because categorizing some children as innately talented is discriminatory. The evidence suggests that such categorization is unfair and wasteful, preventing young people from pursuing a goal because of teachers' or parents' unjustified conviction that they would not benefit from the superior opportunities given to those who are deemed to be talented.

In connection with this conclusion we emphasize again the importance of the intrinsic social group and the larger community for compensation and support in case some assets are missing or incomplete. Given the recent finding that the brain is continuously restructured and reordered by

participating in various activities, offered by the groups one is part of, the reshaping and restructuring becomes a communal responsibility. The coordinated plurality of brains is again an argument against a focus on the single, isolated brain or, for that matter, the single, isolated individual.

If a child has successfully finished primary school and if there are no signs of mental damage, there is no reason to question its “talents” and it should be able to become whatever it really wants. During primary school, some mental deficits can still show up, but once youngsters enter secondary school, it is no longer a damaged brain that causes a lack of good results. Disappointing outcomes should most often be attributed to a lack of motivation. But here is the rub. Motivation is produced between people. Arrests of the type we encountered in Chapter 4 on male–female relationships, in Chapter 5 on status, and that we will encounter in Chapter 7 on ethnicity have a strong influence on the way children are supported or not supported in educational ambitions. In some communities, the saying goes that higher education is “not meant for our kind of people.” Although often intended as a comforting phrase, it really is not very motivating for the child. Both compensation and stimulation are missing from such a youngster’s educational trajectory. The brain is not properly stimulated, and belonging to a certain class is considered to be a matter of fate rather than a situation one can alter. In the curious interplay between class and ability, the idea is maintained that being of lower class automatically implies a failing aptitude and lower intelligence. A successful participation in primary school education is not considered to be a sign of later success. Parents and peers somehow anchor children’s strivings in what they consider to be the highest possible attainment. This state of affairs ought to convince us to give motivation a central place in modernization efforts throughout society, whether in ethnic groups or in the lower-class areas of both cities and rural areas. Persistent behavioral patterns, if no longer contested and criticized, are likely to interfere with social mobility. It is not a lack of talent that plays the prominent role here.

### The hardships of measurement

We have to be honest about the measurement of intelligence: There is no reliable and valid measurement of human cognitive capacities that does not draw on previously acquired knowledge. This does not preclude that, throughout its history, psychology and particularly its research practitioners have found useful practical ways for measuring someone’s capacities or so-called “intelligence.” But practically useful does not yet mean scien-

tific. Of course, if a company wants to select a leader who conducts 360-degree horizontal consulting sessions, who is democratic and egalitarian in his or her approach, and if the management makes it obligatory that every new leader is tested in a leadership assessment procedure, then such a person will certainly be found. It is a better procedure than just to have a talk or two. In the same vein, the practical measurement of intelligence by all kinds of tests has been psychology's most impressive contribution to the advancement of meritocratic principles as selection criteria, against a tendency to only appoint people from higher social backgrounds. Yet, what passes for the measurement of intelligence is in fact a diagnostic instrument for educational achievement, because it draws from previously acquired knowledge. This became clear in tests that were used for the recruitment of World War II soldiers in the United States. The tests to be completed contained, for example, pictures of items that were easily recognizable to youngsters used to a middle-class environment, but which were completely new for recruits from lower-class background – such as a chimney on a brick house. Not surprisingly, the mean intelligence of the recruits turned out to be fairly low, since they were mostly from lower-class backgrounds.

On closer inspection, what is generally measured by intelligence tests are the abilities required to do the test. This passes mistakenly for an independent measurement of someone's cognitive capacity, however. There is no dispute about the necessity of an intact visual system for taking such a test. Yet no one would argue that the ability to see is a part, let alone a constituting part, of intelligence. Likewise, the ability to reason abstractly is important, as is spatial orientation. But just as in the case of seeing, it is an error to think that these abilities belong to intelligence. Yet, much of psychological intelligence testing is directed at precisely this, the diagnosis of abstract reasoning or spatial orientation. Finding an answer within a certain limited time does not belong to intelligence either. Yet, it is quite common to take the speed with which certain problems are solved as a measure of intelligence. As mentioned above, there is no objection to the use of practical instruments, to be applied in a consistent way to all children of a certain age in order to assess their educational accomplishments, and even their ability to participate in the curriculum. Yet to devise an instrument that assesses people's cognitive capacity independent of their background and schooling history is quite another matter. The time needed to complete a task depends on prolonged practice or familiarity with the problem. Inhibitions stemming from affective disturbances or lack of confidence can easily interfere with the task. Memory may be blocked for all sorts of reasons, which prevents finding the

answers that are needed. In short, distractions and things interfering with the task can obscure someone's competence. The test results are also related to previous experience and motivation in taking tests or doing tasks such as those in a test. Therefore, to really measure cognitive capacity as such one should not invoke previously acquired knowledge or skills when testing. These are always related to the opportunities and chances the individual has had.

A lack of instruments that *really* measure cognitive capacity amplifies the social problems in which talent and motivation are insufficiently disentangled. It makes it impossible to distinguish between creativity, independent thinking, flexibility, affective stability, and vigorousness, which are all involved in operating intelligently. A quick and unsound assessment of someone's cognitive capacities in terms of schooling history, acquired knowledge, group-bound training, and school-related aptitudes obscures the role of the wider environment and the community in which the children are brought up. Motivation in particular is intimately related to group support, as we have argued. It is astonishing to see how much attention is paid to individual talent and how little to the way in which each separate individual is embedded in local niches of peers, family, neighborhood, and ethnic groups. If talent does not exist in the sense of a clear and distinct inborn capacity but rather in this sense of a wide-ranging, colorful palette of features and characteristics that are important for cognitive functioning, then every healthy child can generally achieve any position he or she wants. Of course, there are inhibiting factors, but these are less related to cognitive capacity than to persistent behavioral patterns in the group. In the primary group of the family and peers, of friends, and in the neighborhood the primary tuning and calibration of the motivational system takes place. Continuous negative feedback and little challenge will turn family, school, and street – the vital triangle in which every youngster grows up – into loci of inhibition instead of advancement.

## Note

- 1 As well as cognitive intelligence, there has been broad recognition in psychology of emotional intelligence (EI) for more than two decades. EI involves a socially smart way to deal with emotion and feeling in which, among other things, the wisdom of the heart is recognized but foremost measured. This approach breaks away from the idea that there is a monolithic form of intelligence, in line with Howard Gardner's (2006) plea for a multifaceted cogni-

tive ability. As a call for much more focus on emotion and feeling in work and education, the launching of EI is relevant. As measured in the form of the scaling of EQ (Emotional Quotient), emotional intelligence suffers from the same shortcomings as IQ. It does not add much to our understanding of how the affective life functions in daily exchange and behavioral practices. Feelings, as we have argued, have a community-based form. They can be styled and shaped, as part of the expressive body (body 2). The reduction of feeling to predominantly the mental machinery – as is the case in EQ – runs the risk of overseeing its social framing since the latter again is a matter of what goes on *between* people, in contradistinction to what goes on *inside* them. Communal aspects and framing issues should be integrated into a complete view of (also affective) development.

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# Ethnicity

## *Cultural Arrests and Bicultural Competence*

In the period after World War II, modern societies all over the northern hemisphere were confronted with an influx of people: from former colonies like India and Pakistan, from bordering poor nations like Mexico, or as a new workforce from countries around the Mediterranean Sea. The latter were actively recruited in the second half of the twentieth century, for example in Turkey's Anatolia and in the Rif region of Morocco. On the European mainland, the Scandinavian countries, Germany, France, Belgium, and the Netherlands had to deal with this new part of the population that initially came to strengthen the workforce temporarily, but in the end did not leave as expected. Prosperity and a relatively good societal position compared to their compatriots at home made a permanent household of their own possible and attractive. Their children became tied to the new environment with bonds of friendship and education. Thus, many families stayed in the countries they had initially visited as so-called "guest workers."

Before 9/11, social democratic political parties in most European countries sympathized with their minorities, which suffered from poor social conditions like the poor indigenous laborers had before them. In the Netherlands, for instance, the policies of the social democratic parties were based on the premise that guest workers from Turkey and Morocco

could integrate culturally while at the same time retaining their own cultural identity. This was considered to be as self-evident as the relatively unproblematic adaptation of Italian and Spanish citizens into north European societies, even though they maintained their Italian or Spanish ways. Indeed, some of the exotic flavor that guest workers brought was deemed attractive, or so it seemed to most people. This attitude quickly faltered, however, in the decade after 9/11. Multiculturalism now met with much resistance in northwestern European countries. By 2010, German, Belgian, Swedish, and Dutch politicians had admitted openly that the whole idea had failed. To retain one's identity while also integrating into the cultures of the receiving countries turned out to be an impossible task. Or at least, it had not happened on a large scale.

Partly, the problem lies in the notion of identity. Identity is not simply a cocktail that can be mixed from new enlightened morals and habits, some traditional folklore, and a few exciting new colors and tastes. It has much more to do with the rusty, persistent, automated practices and their accompanying feelings that we encountered in Part One. The newcomers' folklore was not the problem in the end. The problem was the concentration of homogeneous immigrant quarters in the poor parts of many cities, due to the sheer number of people and the lack of acceptance of so many newcomers by the other residents. Schools had to contend with a large proportion of immigrant children. Lagging behind in cultural adaptation became clearly visible. The resident majority expected newcomers to adopt modern standards of living and to comply with the general mores of the residents, once they became a bit more prosperous. But the reverse happened. Prosperity came very slowly and unevenly. Some newcomers succeeded, but some clearly did not.

The latter's visible deprivation was considered to be a clear sign that integration was impossible and a proof of failure to do so by immigrants in general. Moreover, this failure was interpreted as proof that the entire immigrant group posed a threat. In a well-balanced study, the historians Jan and Leo Lucassen (2011) debunked common beliefs about the so-called "fiasco" of integration. The authors argue that sticking to the lifestyle of their upbringing, acquired in (we restrict ourselves to the Dutch variant of the problem) predominantly the Anatolian hinterland of Turkey and the Rif Mountains of Morocco, is the problem of an identifiable group. It certainly cannot be used against immigrants as a whole. The authors do not trivialize the issue, but give it its proper weight. It is local deprivation that poses the real challenge. The authors also claim that a rather vocal segment of the majority group is unwilling to confront that challenge. Practicing tolerance thus became more problematic than the

Dutch had anticipated (but the same situation was present elsewhere in Europe), notwithstanding the fact that they had taken pride in their liberal attitudes and tolerance for decades.

In this turmoil about integration, Dutch policymakers had thought that they could repeat the trick by means of which Catholics and Protestants had managed to live together so successfully since the beginning of the modern Dutch state in the second half of the nineteenth century. Throughout the history of the Netherlands, tensions between the members of these religions were endemic. Conflicts subsided, however, the moment people were allowed to organize their social life in terms of their own “particular pillar” in society, as these religion-based social groupings were called. The common people were organized in those pillars, which included organizations for professional workers, leisure societies and sports clubs, broadcasting companies, and political parties. One’s entire public and private life could be organized within the pillar of one’s denomination. The elite at the top of each pillar met in overarching societies or organizations that in fact made the important decisions in society. Not surprisingly, some considered this model suitable for the integration of Islam into Dutch society as well. Why not try to turn this religion into a separate pillar, next to the Catholics and the various branches of Protestantism?

It proved hard, however, to fully integrate the Islamic religion, especially given the speed with which policymakers thought integration ought to take place. Moreover, the success of “pillarization” in the past proved no guarantee of its success in the future. The idea of integrating while retaining one’s identity – religiously and otherwise – was much too confusing for that goal. Identity is above all a technical term for the continuous process of affirming who one is and who one wants to become. It includes the wish to live the way one thinks is best. It does not refer to some fixed characteristic of a person but rather to something that has to be established time and again. Identity involves presenting oneself according to crucial and authentic feelings and ideas about oneself. However, a good observer can tell that this presentation is to an important extent shaped along the practices of the group. Indeed, as we argued earlier, feelings of authenticity result from a good fit with or mastery of the group-typical practices.

Sources of identity can vary from the local social group to which one belongs to identification with an entire nation’s legacy, history, and in many cases religion. Identity is a multifaceted phenomenon; therefore, a single label does not cover it. One person can be part of many groups at the same time, and she or he can develop skills to switch identities depending on the social circumstances. Instead of saying that one has an identity

it is perhaps much better to describe the formative dynamic involved by using the verb “identitying.” In short, psychologically speaking, it is the process of going around and about things, becoming engaged and authentically committed to them, largely in accord with the expectations of important others. In that regard, *belonging* appears to be the main impetus, as argued in Roy Baumeister and Mark Leary’s (1995) seminal article. Most people want to belong. Emphasizing that fundamental need seamlessly involves affirming one’s identity.

It is not so difficult to establish for any society what people in general want, or what they are striving for. It can be clearly expressed in policy, law, and the running of the state. Identity as the wholesale product of the way in which the dominant behavioral patterns of, for example, Dutch citizens are organized, is not difficult to pin down. To name but one: The equality of men and women is readily formulated as a general requirement, but what such a laudable equality entails in actual practice is quite another matter, as we have seen in Chapter 4. Likewise, it is easy to explicate what the general public prefers, believes in, and wants others to comply with. But to articulate what participants need to do in order to live up to such abstract ideals proves very difficult. In that case, ideals turn out to be far removed from daily life. It is difficult to translate them into actual behavioral requirements.

We can pinpoint a few things that appear as a matter of course to most Westerners: Authoritarian behavior is discouraged, and in regard to child raising and education a certain assertiveness is almost automatically expected, even from young children, with respect to their parents and teachers; parents do not interfere much with the partner choice of their children, and if it happens anyway, it is very subtle and unobtrusive; women certainly are not considered to be the property of men; one is free to indulge in one’s own sexual preferences; religion is considered something private, and it should not permeate the entire public life. The first and obvious stumbling block for newcomers arriving from other areas in the world is that such themes in Western countries are for them by no means obvious. The newcomers may have been raised in local communities in which authoritarian parental interference is common, in which it is the parents’ explicit task to find spouses for their children, in which men are expected to dominate public life, or in which religion permeates all aspects of social life as a matter of course. The immigrants find themselves in very different social circumstances, and have learned to do things conspicuously differently from those who were native born, but with a similar feeling of authenticity and obviousness. In the group they primarily belong to, the newcomers are involved in a different “identitying”

process. To recalibrate their behavior is quite an elaborate process; certainly not just a matter of receiving different instructions, or being presented with different opinions, and ideals.

None of the issues above is merely a matter of private predilections, values, or explicit cognitions, but rather of routines and preferences that are part of the trained embodied practices as we have seen argued in Part One. As soon as unfamiliar behavioral patterns are placed in opposition to one another, the most common behavioral routines are put under pressure for both newcomers and residents. But what to do with people who cling to the patterns of their own group as a matter of course? It is easy to say that one accepts and respects the ways of another. However, in reality it becomes clear very quickly that it is often hard to maintain an open mind. Time and again, unfamiliar noises, smells, movements, and looks overcome one's best intentions to be patient and understanding, or not to bother. In schools and on the streets, foreign patterns may evoke pejorative feelings as soon as they seem to interfere with what the majority is used to. When newcomers, especially when they are visible as such, are also competitors on the job market and in housing, negative feelings and reactions seem to emerge automatically. This raises the question what generates these kinds of reactions.

Yet, not every member of the minority group is equally committed to the prevailing patterns in their own group. Some succeed in changing their ways in a new social environment, while others tend to cling even harder to their small minority group instead. What is sometimes overlooked is that many newcomers know how to secure some wealth and prosperity while retaining their typical patterns of behavior in other domains, especially that of their family. This sensitizes us to the idea that integration is not a cultural issue that applies to all of society's members equally. There are no concrete practices that characterize the Dutch, the Americans, or the British as a whole. We must always focus on local behavioral patterns in local groups. It also tells us that integration is not an all-or-nothing affair. Understanding integration as practices in different domains, to be achieved by embodied engagement (i.e., training) rather than by mere instruction, can help to shed light on these affairs.

## **Integration is not an All or Nothing Process**

When newcomers enter the country of their choice and become involved in its social life, they often encounter a society in which they can participate on different levels. They will find new situations related to money,

relations, goods, services, and institutions. Due to their own background, they are involved in their own behavioral patterns around family and marriage, honor and authority, religion and faith. Thus, when looking at integration from the perspective of what kinds of tasks need to be accomplished, it is clear that integration involves not one massive confrontation but a diversified participation in modern society.

Of course, "society" itself should be portrayed in its multilayered realness, instead of in such general characteristics as risk, boundlessness, or abstract moral order. Society is a place to live and interact with others, to earn a living, and to collect material goods. A typical Western society consists of all kinds of institutions such as a competitive market, a place where social support and health care is provided under given conditions, where citizens' properties are institutionally protected by law, and where standardized high-quality personal efforts in schools and on the job are required from everyone. Moreover, being brought up in a given society implies that one has learned how to behave properly in all those different situations and relations with others, whether on a friendly, professional, or intimate level. Newcomers have to also learn these skills, which implies that they need to combine the local and identifying practices they learned in the past with the private and civic requirements demanded by the new circumstances.

### Material goods and welfare

In a consumer society, newcomers often seem to find their way around easily. When the focus is on how they make money and how they otherwise profit from all kinds of goods and services, they often adapt successfully. For many people who continue to enter the European countries from the rural areas around the Mediterranean or from the Caribbean, the main goal is to get a better life materially. Striving for material welfare and distinguishing themselves from others with signs of prosperity (in which most resident members of society show a lot of interest as well) quickly becomes an integral part of many newcomers' practice.

From within the group of immigrants there are few objections to acquiring the signs of wealth and prosperity that advertise to the broader community that one is doing well. Even though most guest workers came from remote villages and small towns in which they used to live with very little, once they have a chance to improve their situation, they find their way around very easily. The second generation of immigrants is often particularly well-dressed in terms of modern Western standards, and many are

prone to show their gadgets and cars that advertise their lifestyle. Nonetheless, their houses are often still decorated in a Moroccan, Turkish, Suriname, Chinese, or Indian style, which reveals that they want to live their private lives in their own way, the way they are used to.

### Participation in institutions

A different picture emerges when the focus is on participation in the institutions that determine modern society, such as health care, law, education, and other important societal provisions. The Western world would not have risen to its appealing level without them. Participation requires special skills, in order to find one's way around in these institutions.

Of course people can be instructed how to behave while applying for a job, or how to deal with teachers and superiors. Yet, the feelings and finesses that are expected to accompany the required behaviors are less easily acquired. We take as an example the way in which care for the elderly is organized in the Netherlands. It is customary for the children to ask for professional help once their parents can no longer lead an independent life. Yet, to rely on institutionalized care involves controlling one's feelings of obligation towards one's parents and replacing those sentiments with a certain facility to ask for professional help and to accept the guidance of the professionals involved. Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia can make the elderly very aggressive and demanding in some cases. Children are not trained to provide effective care in these circumstances. In this area, many Western countries have gradually become reliant on institutions. Newcomers have to learn how to deal with this aspect of the welfare society too, yet for them the required sentiments may be challenging.

One of the authors came across an interesting difference between Turkey and the Netherlands in this respect. In Turkey, it is generally not the done thing to put one's parents in a nursing home. It is a sign of respect and love if one takes care of aging parents in one's own house. Turks are very annoyed if one does not fulfill this obligation. Thus, Turkish students were astonished by the ease with which the Dutch put their parents in nursing homes. Yet, it soon became apparent that they forgot an essential feature of their own society when compared to the Netherlands. In the Netherlands, people tend to live much longer than the elderly in Turkey, and consequently suffer more ill-health and disability. In Turkey the parents, even the grandparents, living in the family group are more often able to assist in the household and be of use in and around the house.



And there was another downside. When the author was in Turkey, in 2002/3, the *Turkish Daily* reported that in some cases the elderly were tied to a chair or to the bed, and that they were fed irregularly, left at the mercy of their children. Once they developed Alzheimer's disease or another dementia, the situation was even worse. Apparently, the form of respect that is required from the children can turn against the parents once a critical phase of grave disability occurs. Then there is insufficient emotional distance. It makes it hard to formulate the demands for care in terms of necessary professional assistance. The students were surprised to hear that institutionalized care in fact involved a professionalization of the caregiver's behavior, in terms of the patterning of feelings they thought were automatically bound up with filial duties. Those duties easily derail in many cases in Turkey when the parents become too difficult to handle. Becoming institution-wise therefore involves the explicit handling of what in other cases comes automatically. Once people live and work in a European country, they usually come to accept these institutions and this way of doing things.

School comprises another example. Pupils and parents need to know how to address teachers. In most European countries, egalitarian relationships are quite common in educational institutions. One is expected to participate in all sorts of activities that promote the well-being of the students and that contribute to their education. This is at odds with the predominant attitude in some Mediterranean countries where paternalistic and authoritarian relationships prevail and where teachers are not expected to negotiate with their students. Instead of teaching critical reading, there is rote learning that leaves the inner core of intelligence untouched. The author's stay in Turkey revealed that the specialists in the department of education of Bosphorus University criticized the educational climate as being too focused on rote learning instead of critical understanding. Participation in the educational system of the receiving country demands compliance with how the educational institution works and what the proper requirements are in terms of the mode of thought that stimulates independence and critical thinking. Many Moroccan or Turkish fathers who are used to authoritative parenting feel threatened when their children confront them with the egalitarian model of negotiation at school. Yet, again, it is a behavioral form that can be learned with some concerted effort in the community.

Likewise, in hospitals one is expected to provide the doctors with the necessary information about pain and discomfort. To endure the hardships of illness, for instance in the name of Allah, is at odds with the

assertiveness on the part of the patient that the current doctor–patient relationships in the West require. Of course it is difficult to give up the self-image of a powerful and independent person, even for people in the West. Illness is often degrading in this respect. In other cases, the illness is seen as fate, for instance by those who are used to religiously inspired endurance and acceptance of life's burdens. This can evoke shame, or unwillingness to put oneself in the hands of nurses and doctors. It often goes almost unnoticed that here too the institutional requirements demand compliance with specific behavioral patterns.

Especially when newcomers or members of a minority are involved, the foregoing examples demonstrate that optimal participation in society's institutions requires learning. The behavior that is expected from citizens is sometimes conceived to be based on rule-directed patterning, which can be acquired by formal instruction. However, when feelings are involved (and they most often are in any interpersonal contact), successful "normal" participation depends above all on finding one's way naturally, with feelings, expectations, and attitudes that appear to fit as a matter of course to the way in which interpersonal relations as well as institutional tasks and responsibilities are organized. This brings us to the third layer of participation: taking part in arrangements.

### Participation in arrangements

Serious problems with integration often occur in areas of persistent behavioral patterns lacking the clear institutional anchorage like the ones we sketched above. For example, in Germany saying "du" (an informal "you") instead of "Sie" (formal "you") to someone one hardly knows, or who occupies a higher-status position, will likely elicit a negative reaction. For Germans, this is a standard and natural practice. Every international businessman learns about it. Such conventions are not so difficult to master and to apply. However, the appropriate feeling for situations in which one can break away from this convention without any offense is much more difficult to acquire. The same is true for the proper use of humor, or all kinds of other pervasive yet tacit practices that are difficult to explicate.

One of the authors remembers sitting alone in a café on the campus of Bosphorus University. It was simply his wish to be on his own for a little while. Apparently, for the people around him it was not a freely chosen solitude, but rather loneliness. In their eyes here was clearly someone who needed to be cared for as a foreigner. People immediately asked whether they could join him to alleviate his loneliness. In a similar way many

Dutch people do not really feel comfortable with the way in which older Moroccan men gather together in a teahouse near the mosque. Boys hanging around in the streets are met with comparable unease. The knowledge that it is common practice for traditional Moroccan men to be out of the house and in public life does not stop Dutch people from feeling a discomfort that is immediately triggered by these situations. The reason is, we argue, that the respective feelings became tuned and trained in very different social arrangements, both physically and psychologically. It is very difficult, then, to learn to fit into the social arrangements of foreigners because this involves much more than knowing why and how. It above all involves feeling for the required behaviors, which is often very difficult, if not impossible, to achieve at a later age. The flip side to this argument is that, despite the best intentions, unfamiliar behavior or appearances may immediately invoke feelings that suggest a lack of fit with the situation at hand.

Everyday practices in the domain of marriage and family, sex and lovemaking, or authority and obedience are therefore often difficult to attune to as an outsider. The way Anatolian brothers protect their sisters or the concern of Moroccan fathers for their daughters – involved as they may be with guarding the family honor to a degree that even in the remote past of Dutch or German family histories was unheard of – often brings about feelings of rejection and disagreement to Westerners. The patriarchal practice of protecting female members of the family or clan fits with ancient rural arrangements. They may have been developed as a reaction to threats from neighboring enemies who were after their women. These practices do, however, not fit the circumstances in modern cities of the West (and they probably do not fit the modernized circumstances at home any longer either). The core problem then becomes one of providing a better fit between behaviors acquired in the past and new circumstances.

We should be careful not to generalize these problems to the community of newcomers as a whole, however. It is always a distinct group that poses a serious challenge. Lamenting about a failing multicultural project in modern European states ignores the fact that most newcomers are integrated well enough to allow them full participation in modern society. Immigrant women in particular set a very good example, even to their male compatriots. If there is a problem, it should be delineated properly with reference to its local nature and certainly not at the expense of a general positive image of the newcomer. Problems are there to be dealt with at the level at which they appear, and not in terms of a general stigmatization of the entire group to which a problematic segment belongs.

## Cultural Arrests

We use the term “cultural arrest” to denote the fixation of behaviors, ideas, and feelings on relations, objects, or situations that are no longer current. When we use the term we imply the dysfunctional nature of the arrested behavior. It is not simply a habit or a custom, but clearly a behavior that does not fit the new circumstances that people try to be part of. In most cases, it is a privileged subgroup that sticks to its behaviors, which were acquired in situations that no longer apply. Those older situations can be in the village or city one grew up in, in the neighborhood, the countryside, or in a special group to which one belongs. Typically, personal development is arrested and fixated at a developmental level that was strong and functional once, but is now a hindrance because the circumstances have changed drastically. More often than not certain subgroups within the migrant community are already opposing the misfit, but the people in charge resist the criticism of those who suffer most from the cultural arrests.

This fixation precludes the development and application of more suitable behaviors, ideas, and feelings in new situations. We like to compare it to the artificial mechanical hand that popped out of the sides of the very first cars, to signal the direction in which the driver was going. The hand of the former coachman remained the inspiration for the design of an artificial signaling device. It took quite a while before it occurred to car designers that blinking lights could serve the same function, in a much easier way. Those lights were not invented right away because thinking about signaling direction remained caught in the image of the coachman sticking out his hand. In this case, we could speak of a technical arrest, a hindrance for discovering new creative solutions. Examples abound, including the QWERTY keyboard (designed to optimize typing speed on mechanical typewriters, but not necessarily the fastest configuration for computer keyboards). The idea of an arrest, technical or cultural, helps to explain why old patterns persist.

Cultural arrests are everywhere, not only among minority groups. It is crucial to distinguish them from persistent habits, conservatism, holding on to restrictive moral convictions, or downright evil behavior. When a wife walks behind her husband, or wears a headscarf, or is strongly opposed to abortion, no cultural arrests have to be involved. It may simply be a matter of habit or convictions, which can be annoying for the progressive part of the community but pose a different problem in that regard. However, when an authoritarian father or husband from a minor-

ity group keeps his wife and daughters locked up in the home and considers them to be some sort of property that he has to safeguard, it is quite clear that his behavior obstructs the women's free development and schooling. The circumstances have changed drastically, but the father's behavior stays arrested in a previously acquired pattern. Crucial for identifying culture arrests, therefore, is some empirical evidence that the group members who suffer from it complain about the interference with their personal choices and needs, once they are in the position to freely reflect on how their situation would be if that restriction would not be present. Clitoridectomy and other mutilations of the genitals are good examples too, because in many cases women organize themselves into groups or organizations which oppose these behaviors and make a case for their abolition.

There are at least two apparent sources of cultural arrests: religion and masculinity. Religion as a source of cultural arrests needs to be distinguished from religion as being also a source of conservatism and restrictive morality. The argument for identifying religion as a source of cultural arrests is supported by empirical evidence that a distinct group is cut off from the privileged positions that others enjoy. An obvious example is cutting women off from educational provisions. If, as for example under the Afghan Taliban regime, they are not allowed to enter schools because religion dictates their absolute confinement to the house at the service of the men, we are dealing with an arrest in an atrocious form. In the West, too, historical examples abound. People were threatened with hell and damnation if they did not accept the conditions under which they had to work. In such cases, behavioral patterns were maintained that did not fit the new circumstances created by a severe criticism of the economic system. In the early twentieth century, during the emancipatory movement of the miners in the southern part of the Netherlands, Catholic priests were accused of contributing to the persistence of exploitation by being too much in the hands of the ruling class. Through their preaching among the poor and dependent workers, they paved the way for submissiveness and acceptance of harsh management. These and many other examples show that behavioral patterns were maintained which proved a hindrance to emancipation and modernity.

But also at the personal level, in the private sphere of the home, cultural arrest occurred. In most Christian countries in the West, the older generation remembers very well how priests and church officials of all denominations controlled the personal life of the members of their flock. It went as far as the bedroom. Birth control and all sorts of marriage arrangements were the subject of clerical interference, thereby arresting control patterns

that were clearly ineffective, such as early withdrawal during sexual intercourse, which involves a skill most people do not master easily. All this happened not so long ago, and in many countries there is still a mix of clerical and worldly power. Of course, clerical interference has been criticized heavily, nevertheless many ordinary people remained vulnerable and obedient to it. They did not have the skills or language to counter the intimidation. The scholarly clergy knew very well how to use the sentiments and fears of the people in the lower strata of society. It is hard to imagine how detailed this interference was in fact. In the Catholic Church after the second Vatican Council, the control slackened, at least in some European countries. As a result, something that could be called “degrealization” (a term that Jan Roes invented to indicate that the flock was withdrawing from the influence of the clerics) occurred. It should not be confused with secularization, which refers to the diminishing importance of religion as the source of a meaningful life.

In Muslim communities, religion is even more part of everyday life than it was for most people in European Christian countries. To a number of Westerners, the conspicuous return of religion in public life while one had become used to religion’s retreat into the private sphere, poses threats to their recently acquired emancipation from religion. Indeed, there are signs that religion is developing more and more into a source of serious cultural arrests with respect to, among others, male–female equality and the treatment of homosexuals. Not only some radical ayatollahs, or imams, but the current Catholic hierarchy as well figure prominently in those arrests. Clearly, religion can serve those who have a definite interest in maintaining the status quo. To stop religion from being a source of arrests requires a thorough understanding of how mutually attuned religious feelings and sentiments are used for the benefit of those in power.

Male dominance and the asymmetrical relationships it entails were amply discussed in Chapter 4. Their origin is a much debated issue, which we will not pursue here. Whether there are evolutionary origins (e.g., for some reason it will have been beneficial for males or for the entire human gene pool that men took the lead in life), or whether men are simply much more inclined to take great risks (which will bring them great successes or great failures), as Roy Baumeister has argued, masculine behavioral patterns are obtained in circumstances that provide men with privileges that are denied to others – who in most cases are women. In other words, behavioral patterns are maintained that give men a head start in all sorts of domains. In contradistinction, women remain the

central players in the home and adapt their strivings to generally accepted behavioral roles.

Arrests related to masculinity particularly show up in work-related areas in the West. Even if women are in charge in certain domains, often there is still a male at the top. He is president, dean, head of the department in the hospitals, *chef de cuisine*, and so on. To be sure, in the Western world a lot has changed in this respect over the last 50 years or so, but many arrests are still visible on closer inspection. If we look to other large regions in the world like the Middle East (although it is changing slowly as well, it appears), India, or China, we still encounter male dominance everywhere. Time and again, research results point out how slowly the bulwark of male dominance is torn down. Research journalist Jeroen Smit (2009) made a detailed analysis of the resistant patterns of male dominance in the Dutch ABN AMRO bank. Marcel Metze (1993) did the same for the electronics company Philips. As a source of cultural arrests, male dominance is difficult to dismantle. Nearly everything in the environment of the male is arranged to accord him his unshakable position: wife, children, friends, his coterie, and of course everybody who participates in or profits from his power. The best chair in the room was traditionally reserved for the man, and so on. Moreover, patriarchy is resistant to change because of its over-symbolization even in modern society. It is remarkable that the symbolization of female attributes of fertility and femininity, for example, is so conspicuously absent. We have to go back 24,000 years ago to the Venus of Willendorf in order to come across at least one important symbolization. One may find a very few other examples in tribal cultures. The phallus, on the other hand, is symbolized ubiquitously all over the world and all through history.

## **Bicultural Competence**

For further discussion of cultural arrests, let us return to the example of courtship behavior we used in Chapter 2. Boys of North African descent are sometimes negatively portrayed in the media because of the vigorous or even violent way in which they use girls outside their own group for sexual experimentation. Social workers are quick to explain the boys' behavior in terms of their cultural background, in which male prowess and display of masculinity are ritualized in very characteristic ways. It belongs to the core of a so-called "honor culture" that boys of a certain age are expected to prove their virility and their sexual readiness. In some



cases, it is even socially acceptable for parents to boast about the number of girls their sons have had. In clear contrast with this often disguised support of masculine prowess, boys are typically expected to marry a girl from their own ethnic background. These boys have to alternate between two cultural sets of practices, so to speak. Those of the Dutch, in order to get Dutch girls to comply with their sexual showing off. But also those at home, to satisfy the expectations of their parents with respect to marriage. The boys know how to switch skillfully between those two sets of practices. All in all they are able to prove their masculinity without violating the honor of the girls in their own cultural group.

In a sense, the boys skillfully alternate between liberal behaviors with respect to the girls that do not belong to their own cultural group, and conservative ones with respect to girls in their own group whose virginity they respect and honor. They date the non-immigrant girls, but in no way do they want to have a wife and a family outside their ethnic community. Here we see again that integration is not a general cultural affair but something that pertains to very distinct subgroups within the societal patchwork of a modern society.

Are these boys skillful? Yes and no. Sometimes they are more successful than Dutch boys, because they are often much more attractive, if only because they appear exotic. That is certainly an asset in attracting Dutch girls. Yet something is lacking as well, which is expressed in some sort of clumsiness with respect to independent girls who do not go for submission and adoration. At times, it is precisely the girls of their own ethnic background to whom this applies. With a degree in higher education, these girls are by no means intimidated and have no appetite for boys who in their eyes are not sufficiently responsive to the way the girls have adapted to the new circumstances.

Teresa LaFromboise and colleagues (1993) published a review article about bicultural competence, which is precisely what we have been talking about here. Biculturalism testifies to the fact that, while becoming more and more acquainted with the society of their choice, newcomers also try to keep their roots in the group they came from. In LaFromboise's research the emphasis is on the skill needed to manipulate these two sets, as we described above. Biculturalism is mostly about two cultures, but more cultures may be involved, of course, even though the number of people who are truly cosmopolitan is relatively small.

Bicultural competence is often distributed unevenly between men and women. This reveals one of the advantages of using this concept, because it enables us to distinguish between those who have mastered the necessary skills and those who somehow remain stuck in the patterns of their

own group. We argued above that cultural arrests are much more likely in the male subgroup because they enable them to maintain their privileged position. Men are generally very much concerned with power – more so than women – and they do not like to give up some of the practices that strengthen their power. Women, by contrast, are much more liable to change, because it enables them to acquire independence from men. Yet, in order to remain accepted in their own cultural group, women demonstrate a special skill in keeping a balance between on the one hand acceptable female behavior in the group they belong to, and clear proof of their modernity on the other. In many cases, the use of headscarves that are fashionable instead of traditional testifies to this skill.

The 2005 movie *Yasmin* by Kenneth Glenaan illustrates this skill in switching between practices at a mundane and very practical level. A Pakistani Muslim girl changes clothes as soon as she is outside the town in which she lives. She switches from the long gown of most women in the street at home to a miniskirt. The headscarf disappears and high heels complete the picture of a modern girl. She behaves like a woman of the world in a way she would not dare under her father's eyes. What makes this movie particularly interesting is the straightforward way in which it reveals the girl's sincere attempt to also be a good Muslim. Her father, but also the rest of the community, really believe that she does not want to be cut loose from her Muslim roots. On the other hand, she really wants to belong to the world of the English guys and girls. The change of clothes is not a fake dressing-up. It is a sincerely developed skill in selecting the proper style for the right circumstances.

Another example comes from Iran. In the mountains north of Teheran young boys and girls conquer the slopes on skis in fancy clothes, with sunglasses and sleek trousers and jackets, while at home in their own town they obey the rules and regulations regarding decent dress. It is again this bicultural competence that brings young people into contact with a world they long for. It helps them develop a habitat parallel to the existing environment of their parents and others in authority.

### Bicultural competence in research

In Part One, we noted that much research fails to focus on real intrinsic social groups, and instead investigates artificially constructed aggregate groups. We will now see how this works in scientific practice when applied to integration models. The work of John Berry (2003) is an example. He constructed four groups on the basis of two dimensions: (1) the degree of identification with the original culture, and (2) the degree of identification

with the culture of the majority (Table 7.1). Berry's four groups, A–D, are as described as follows:

- A *Marginalizing*. If identification with the culture of the majority as well as with the culture of the minority is shallow, marginalization occurs. These people belong to no group at all.
- B *Assimilating*. These people are characterized by shallow identification with their own (minority) culture and a very strong identification with the dominant culture. They will likely operate successfully in the newly chosen society, if that is what they want. Generally they assimilate completely in the domain of money and material goods. Berry calls them “assimilators” because of their strong identification with the country of their choice. They show a high degree of participation in the country's social institutions. These are the people who take a critical stance towards their own background and fully embrace the ideals of the dominant culture. They reject elements from their own background that do not fit into the newly acquired lifestyle. They need not turn their backs on the people of their origin. On the contrary, they are often well aware of where they come from and they do not want to be cut off from their roots, but like to behave in ways more or less like the majority in the new country. They are often writers, journalists, social workers, students, successful businessmen/women, etc.
- C *Separating*. A very high identification with one's own background and a low identification with the receiving group leads to separation and a stand-offish position in society. These people tend to stick to their own group.
- D *Integrating/alternating*. People who show a high degree of identification on both dimensions generally possess a well-developed skill in switching between two cultures. They confront the citizens of the majority culture with their own demands, and they are highly critical of behavioral patterns of people from their own background that tend to be at odds with the requirements of the new situation. They are the well-integrated part of the minority. According to Berry, identification with both cultures is an absolute requirement for integration.

Over the years, Berry's model has generated a large amount of research that generally focuses on the statistical analysis of the subgroups presented in Table 7.1. The model can be compared to a trawl net that catches the bulk of fish that fit the criteria for the net's design. However, such a probing for the degree of identification involves artificially designed

**Table 7.1** John Berry's integration matrix.

	<i>Weak identification foreign majority</i>	<i>Strong identification foreign majority</i>
<i>Weak identification own minority</i>	A Living in seclusion (marginalizing)	B Critical toward own minority (assimilating)
<i>Strong identification own minority</i>	C Aloof toward foreign majority (separating)	D Integrating/alternating

groups constructed on the basis of statistical procedures. Often, members of minorities are confronted with the question whether they feel more Dutch or more Turkish, more American or more Mexican. It proves very difficult to answer such a question. Not so much because of the loyalties that are at stake, but because emotions and feelings surrounding identification and feeling at home are generally blurred and multifaceted.

Moreover, in statistics one can easily manipulate the dividing point on a scale that assesses, for example, the degree of belonging. It is therefore hard to decide what people's real choices are and how they really experience their degree of belonging. To ask for a rational judgment in which the various commitments to two or even more countries are weighted and decided upon, does not really tap the experience of bicultural belonging. We once again run into the problem we discussed in Chapter 3. Aggregate groups are constructed on the basis of criteria that the researchers deem important. To assess a group's identification pattern on the basis of abstract questions about preferences posed to an aggregate group misses out on the actual sources of tensions and commitments in real living groups. Migrants who live together in an area constitute intrinsic social groups. To treat them as such is much more in accordance with their actual experiences.

Despite the efforts of LaFromboise and colleagues (1993), even today much psychological research into minorities is comparable to that of John Berry in that no real, existing competent groups are identified in such research. Rather, bicultural competence is used as a criterion to construct artificial aggregates. Entire cultures are typified in broad strokes that hardly touch on people's experience. One talks *about* instead of *with* the people under scrutiny. They are bombarded with long questionnaires on issues that some persons need to think about for the very first time.

Gerben Westerhof (2003) shows that people, when they are confronted for the first time with those questions, tend to answer arbitrarily and incoherently. Only when people are personally involved in the subject matter do they start to think and reflect on the basis of their ability to report from real experience. Such an ability reveals itself in the consistency of their answers. It is therefore much better to interview people in a structured and elaborate way, argues Westerhof.

It is especially important to employ biculturally competent members of a minority group in the research practice. In the Netherlands, Micha de Winter and Marc Noom (2003) have used such techniques of peer research in their investigation of street kids. They employed street kids as experts and co-researchers. Since they are well-informed about problems in which they are involved themselves, they can assist in all phases of the research: the construction of a questionnaire and the conducting of the interviews. They also participated in brainstorming about the results and the consequences of the results for a further approach to the problems. As such, biculturally competent youngsters can be used to explore the interactions in their own ethnic group among home, street, and school. It is an alternative to just talking about *the* Turks, *the* Pakistanis, *the* Inuit, and so on, which often leads to stigmatizing the entire group on the basis of a few instigators and troublemakers.

The problem of integration is thus quite clear. Because of the way we indigenous citizens feel so at home in our dominant culture, we cannot understand why it is so difficult for others to comply with our way of doing things, with our way of feeling, with our ideas, with our practices. Our way is so self-evidently right. We do not understand why the other has such difficulty adopting the patterns we are used to. And of course, the opposite is true as well: The disturbing folklore of headscarves, long dark garments, or women always following the men, are transient phenomena in a world that for some subgroups on either side of the divide between majority and minority groups changes too quickly.<sup>1</sup> These changes trigger sentiments that are at odds with what some fellow members of one's group are already committed to. This is an important starting point. We need those people who are ahead of others in their group. As competent bicultural individuals they have developed the skills to alternate. As such, they can provide a foundation for the required training and support that is needed in building a viable community. They also serve as some sort of signpost, indicating that changing circumstances have created a misfit between the still existing pattern and a group that wants to go ahead and use the newly created opportunities for change. It is exactly this misfit that calls for an analysis of how those patterns are maintained, triggered, complied with, and pre-

sented as if they are part of a whole culture or nation, instead of being characteristic of only a certain part of the population.

### Gut feelings in action

Robert Zajonc (1980) demonstrated in an influential article that “preferences need no inferences.” He reported a long strain of research into the organization of affect and summed up features of emotion and feeling that prove their dominance of deliberation and organized thinking. Today, neurologists, psychologists, cognitive and affective scientists are working together in order to understand the affect system as it operates in the judgment of events, situations, and people.<sup>2</sup> In Chapter 3 we related the work of Antonio Damasio concerning the clear distinction between emotions and feelings. In the affect system a secondary system is operative once emotions have put the entire bodily reaction system on alert. We added that the styling and ritualization of this *feeling* becomes learned in the group of others (often already skilled others).

In the Behavior Regulation Laboratory of Radboud University, Nijmegen, a group of researchers under the direction of Daniel Wigboldus tried to come to grips with feelings in action. More precisely, they wanted to know how gut feelings operate, in relation to rational accounts. In the United States, similar studies have been conducted under the label “implicit racism.” In the Nijmegen study, subjects who told the experimenter that they have no prejudice towards Moroccan people were subjected to an ingenious experimental setup. The subjects received special spectacles in an Immersive Virtual Environment Research Laboratory. They were told that their memory capacity was being investigated. To that end, a task was designed in which they had to walk in the virtual space towards a virtual person. The subjects had to read and memorize both a number and an object on the T-shirt of the avatar. In order to read what was on the shirt, the subjects had to approach the virtual person to some extent. The distance they kept could be measured very accurately. At the same time, biometric data were gathered, including skin response and heart-beat. The avatars used had either Caucasian or Moroccan features. The results were astonishing. White students maintained a larger distance towards from Moroccan avatars than from Caucasian ones. Also, the subjects’ physiological reactions showed more signs of fear while approaching the Moroccan avatar.

These results are remarkable, not least to the subjects of the study themselves. The unconscious triggering of social distance occurs even after having convinced oneself that one is utterly antiracist. Much remains

unexplored and unexplained. All we have is differences in distance, galvanic skin response, and heartbeat. American psychological research suggests that African Americans tend to keep a distance from their black compatriots as well. This suggestion is derived from the research of Anthony Greenwald, Brian Nosek, and Mahzarin Banaji (2003) using the Implicit Association Test. How can this automatic triggering of the distancing response be understood, as it does not appear to be based on distinct racial features? The research findings suggest that the tendency to maintain distance is learned, and that it depends on learned experiences of danger or being cautious. Thus, we tend to explain these findings in terms of the calibration of our senses in the community in such a way that these automatic responses come about. Our perspective of individuals becoming tuned to the group they belong to can readily be applied to the unconscious triggering. Whatever the cognitive unconscious does, it does what it has learned to do in the group. The tuning itself has to be dealt with in terms of a distinct psychological asset in the production of behavioral reactions and patterns. If black people are met with contempt and fear, depicted as strange and unreliable, presented always as low status people, prone to crime, always seen on a work floor with broom and bucket, it is very hard to resist what the senses dictate to the unconscious mind. Though we have no clear proof of what is suggested here, it still might be wise to try and recalibrate the reactive system through education and exposure that would require training and practice. Appeal to rational insight alone does not change gut feelings.

## **Integration Policy Revisited**

It seems that most modern European nations have reached the stage in which policymakers deplore the eagerness with which they have welcomed immigrants. The attitude of reserve that currently characterizes many people in some North Atlantic nations is ill-informed. Historically speaking, immigrants have always been a source of advancement and change everywhere. In that regard the United States has been an inspiring example of a nation that has welcomed immigrants, although it also has its problems, as in its southern border states where there is considerable hostility directed at Latino groups. Unmet expectations regarding the ability to create a multicultural society – either in the form of a melting pot or a quilt, which would allow for the seamless patching of subgroups on the fabric of modern society – create a distinct problem. Yet, this should be no reason for closing one's borders to strangers. If the twentieth



century was an age of daring ideological experiments, the first decade of the twenty-first century showed deception in this regard. A revision of immigration policies in terms of clearly defined and delineated *local* problems would be much welcomed.

In our opinion, the means to deal with local, persistent behavioral patterns that do not fit the changing circumstances should not come from ideology and policy, but from slow and steady educational reform. Youngsters are generally more open to the shaping and styling of behavior than adults. They use the educational institutions to escape parental control, while at the same time creating their own parallel world in which they are able to enjoy the good life. Yet, to avoid the risk of simply giving in to dominant community pressures of the responsible adults, skills need to be mastered, within the group of experts that exemplify the desired bicultural mix. Such experts might be key figures in the media, sports, entertainment or in other, more ordinary, niches in which behavior is styled and shaped.

The lack of all kinds of skills to really participate in society is the main reason for failing integration. Mantras about the need for compliance with the abstract norms and values of the majority have proven to be of no avail. Norms and values do not propel behavior, nor do they bring about behavioral changes. At stake is the proper acquisition of all kinds of bodily routines, including their accompanying feelings. These cannot be learned in a short course, let alone from reading a booklet. They can only be mastered properly within a community of already skilled others. This includes feeling for all kinds of social situations. When skills and feelings of different people are not brought in line with one another, they tend to live their lives apart from one another in genuine misunderstanding. These are not problems that affect entire cultures as such because there is nothing inherent in people that makes them principally unfit. Existing persistent patterns in people's behavior may function as cultural arrests, however, and unlearning behavioral routines is notoriously difficult. Nonetheless, the issue is certainly not to be cast in terms of cultures that oppose one another. We encountered similar problems within cultures/groups when we discussed differences in social class or status.

## Notes

- 1 This problem remains even though in many large Western cities there is actually no longer a clear majority group. Adopting modern lifestyles is a major challenge for almost all groups in those cities (see also Chapter 9).

- 2 Currently, the most influential book that summarizes the discussion about the interplay of the affective and the cognitive system is Daniel Kahneman, *Thinking, Fast and Slow* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2011).

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# Faith

## *Religion as a Man-made Order*

At the end of the nineteenth century, Friedrich Nietzsche (1887) proclaimed that God was dead. Naturally, this did not represent the opinion of everyone, as many people remained sensitive to the power and influence of religion. Still today, believers of the different denominations argue and fight each other vigorously. Christians and Muslims in Egypt or Indonesia, Muslims and Jews in Israel, Muslim, Sikhs, and Hindus in India, and Protestants and Catholics in Northern Ireland are just a few notorious examples of areas where a peace process seems to revert time and again to religious clashes. And the early twenty-first-century attacks on Western metropolises were of course also motivated by religious fanaticism. Thus, religion turns out to have a dark side that appears far removed from the pious surrender, respect for life, or emotional assistance in coping with life's destiny and fate that religious leaders preach. One would expect that such misuse of religion would bring about its definite decline, as Nietzsche foresaw. However, and on the contrary, it seems as if God was nowhere near dead, given the zest for religion worldwide, which sometimes seems stronger than ever.

It is not so difficult to draw the standard picture: it is people's nature to believe. That is what they want time and again, and that is also what they need. They have to believe in something, or else their lives are worthless. The power to devote themselves to a greater cause and to be reverent

brings about the very best in people. There is a rich tradition of texts and images worldwide that enables people to transcend themselves, that makes them humble and willing to make sacrifices, as well as noble and generous toward others. But the origins of all these virtues are not to be found in man himself, but instead in God, Allah, Jahweh, and so on. He is the source of inspiration; He is the ultimate ground of existence. The vitality of religion therefore stems from Something/Someone that is influential: God in the lives of the people. It is difficult to argue with whoever believes that this is indeed true. It is not our intention to engage in this kind of argument. Rather, with respect to faith and religion, we are interested in those aspects of religion that do not invoke faith and belief as a personal choice or a personal experience.

Probably few people will have been successful in truly convincing a deeply religious person who holds on to a personal and faithful surrender to God that he or she holds on to a persistent misunderstanding. A religious believer will not easily accept the idea that his or her faith boils down to a number of behavioral patterns that enable the peaceful and harmonious living together of people, but that are nevertheless invented and sustained by humans. It will be much easier to believe that one's fundamental experience of being dependent on transcendental forces is connected with a higher deity than with profane and human causes.

Still, we aim to show that in very important respects, religion and religious belief are directly connected to persistent patterns in human behavior, which only occur – as always in this book – between people. Moreover, we present religious faith and belief as a separate, fundamental domain of human interactions, on a par with the other domains we have discussed in previous chapters: sex, status, age, and ethnicity. The reason is that religion too involves patterns of behavior that are tuned in the community, become part of their identity, are based on practices, and create commitments in terms of opinions, feelings, and doctrinaire preoccupations that have a strong impact on them. This is certainly the case if one looks at it on a global scale. The decline of religion in some European countries is an exception rather than the rule.

Religious faith can motivate people to the bone. In that regard, it can be such an elementary marker of beliefs, practices, and identity that everywhere around the globe great pains are taken to incorporate religion in the behavioral patterns of a group in order to let it do its work in building the community, directing someone's actions, and making clear to every member what to hold on to. The domain of faith belongs to the sphere of human interaction, in that respect, and the patterning of behavior occurs in the same way as in the other domains presented so far. Religious

belief and practice, too, involve a fundamental behavioral field. The identities that religious observance creates are hard to ignore, whatever we think of the source. What people like to be, religiously, is as fundamental as their sexual or ethnic identity. At least as much “identity work” is involved in it. When we link religion to persistent behavioral patterns, we not only refer to those that are based on forced compliance, which can lead to fear, compulsion, humiliation, and rivalry among people. We also refer to patterns in behavior that engage people on the basis of free commitment. Particularly in religious faith, compliance is often strikingly spontaneous and natural. In short, in this chapter we will deal with religion in terms of widely spread behavioral patterning that is nonetheless man-made.

## **A Behavioral Scientific Approach to Religion**

If there is any domain in which it becomes apparent how people would like to be and where they present their engagement with the group, it must be the domain of religion. That people live in meaningful order is particularly clear in religion. It is ubiquitous in worship and prayer, but also in the way certain practices are ordained. Religion is for the most part ordinance. This can involve people in a very profound way. Religious practices are backed by all sorts of doctrines and rituals that motivate great numbers of people in a similar way. At the same time, religion appears to be very much directed at accepting some people as one’s superiors and instructors, especially in relation to living one’s most private life. This phenomenon is often disguised because one’s moral stance is presented as involving personal surrender and free choice. But on closer inspection there is always communal seduction, so to speak. Some leader or teacher invites people to be aware of the moral challenge and points to his adherents as the successful examples to be followed. All this need not be established with force; what is remarkable in religion is that the ordered interference in the private sphere is, or at least appears to be, self-chosen and gentle. Striking, however, is the presence of a religious elite who pretend to have more knowledge than others of what life is truly about. They seem to know better than anyone else what is and what should be.<sup>1</sup>

It would seem perfectly natural for behavioral scientists to use their knowledge of behavior production and motivation when faced with the interesting behavioral phenomena in the realm of religion. Yet, a scientific analysis also seems to run counter to the content of the religious

experience in which the hand of God seems to steer everything. Some have concluded therefore that the twain (science and religion) should never meet because they constitute two separate realms of meaning. This is a very reputable position put forward by Ludwig Wittgenstein (1929), who argued that the morally good and virtuous, as preached by religion, can only be shown to others as an example to be followed. It cannot be argued about. Science certainly cannot provide a blueprint for a better life. Many have followed him in this attempt at making room for religion. A well-known example is Stephen Jay Gould's (2002) idea of "non-overlapping *magisteria*" in which religion keeps its own masterly command over people and the world. But we consider these positions to be much too modest. We discuss religion here as a man-made product, a result of the generic human capacity to believe. We do not discuss whether personal religious conviction is justified or true. There is no reason to doubt people's sincere belief in God if they do not doubt it themselves. Our analysis is not about personal religious commitment but instead about religious behavioral patterns by means of which people regulate communication and mutual coordination. We approach religious belief psychologically, as a special case of believing in general.

### Religious belief as a special case of believing in general

All human artifacts like marriage, the courtroom, laws, declarations of love or hate, the value of money, the stock market, and so on, at some point always invoke belief. More precisely, without belief, the entire range of phenomena, from love to the economy, will not work. If we do not believe that pieces of special paper, small objects of some sort of metal, assets and equity, or simply figures on our computer screen, represent actual value, then our money system will not work. If we do not believe that the abstract rules and obligations we submit ourselves to are backed by some actual authoritative power, the law and our tax system will probably collapse very quickly. And if we do not believe that most people honestly want to live up to their promises, including matrimonial vows and the promise to care for offspring, public life will become virtually impossible. Some have wondered what differentiates human beings from animals. We think that belief is just such a differentiating feature: to create something by ourselves and subsequently to ask ourselves – or even demand ourselves – to be committed to it. Without belief as a generic human, cognitive capacity, human interactions are impossible. Or to put it more sharply: Belief is the stuff that human relations are made of. We do not imply belief as a series of propositions and arguments; we mean

that belief is an indispensable feature inherent in human existence. As such it can be called technically *faith*, faith in another human being, in institutions, in man-made arrangements, etc. It is an indispensable cognitive-affective feature of human functioning in general. Bodies and brains are made of fiber and forces; human interaction is made of something as elusive as faith.

### Belief without any evidence

Yet, in the case of having faith in another person, there is still this other person. We can empirically assess to a certain degree whether this person is to be trusted, whether he or she is worthy of being loved by us, and we can establish what he or she actually does to deserve our love. In principle, we can judge someone's actions and draw conclusion about how much we still believe in that person. As such, our faith can become stronger, or weaker, or it may otherwise change. Likewise, in the case of money, there are still the coins or the figures on the screen. Granted, it becomes ever more difficult to believe in money the more abstract it becomes: from goods, to coins, to plastic, to digits. Georg Simmel (1907) foresaw these psychological implications over a century ago. Nonetheless, there are institutions that at one point can really tell you that your money is gone, or perhaps that you can buy more stuff than you could ever imagine. And, when breaking the law, there is the empirical fact of going to jail: very physical and very real. But what can we say about religious belief? Does religion involve something comparable to the partner we have faith in? Can its veracity be tested or checked?

In order to better understand religious faith, we turn to an interpretation that has been highly influential. Søren Kierkegaard (1846) describes a special psychological feature of religious belief. It is indeed psychological because it involves the cognitive assessment of one's commitment. Are one's own actions really confirming that one is submitting oneself, to really be committed? What does such commitment entail? Kierkegaard, using the voice of his pseudonym Johannes Climacus,<sup>2</sup> relates the story of a green bird in a tree in the city of Copenhagen. "If God had taken the form, for example, of a rare, enormously large green bird with a red beak, that perched in a tree on the embankment and perhaps even whistled in an unprecedented manner," Climacus/Kierkegaard contends, "then our party-going man would surely have had his eyes opened." That is to say, any human being immersed in the pleasures of the world would be on his guard, be much more self-conscious, and ready to comply as much as possible with the laws and regulations of the group he belongs to, if



God as the custodian could be pointed at. But that is not what faith is about. Without risk, there is no faith, Kierkegaard says elsewhere in the book.

Faith is the contradiction between the infinite passion of inwardness and the objective uncertainty. If I am able to apprehend God objectively, I do not have faith; but because I cannot do this, I must have faith. If I want to keep myself in faith, I must continually see to it that I hold fast to the objective uncertainty, see to it that in the objective uncertainty I am out on 70,000 fathoms of water and still have faith.

How people can accomplish this, Kierkegaard does not say. He is an avowed but critical Lutheran, believing in God's grace as the only avenue to salvation. Yet, this reference to God's grace is theological while we are focused on what faith involves psychologically. Imagine a banker who just has cashed his bonus for bringing profits to his bank by selling products of which he had calculated the risks by using intractable mathematics to disguise the extreme risk involved. Would he not immediately confess and admit his obnoxious risk-taking, if someone pointed to the bird in the tree as the punishing God? "Look, there He is; He really will judge you." But would such a confession and conversion be a truly courageous deed? Not at all, Kierkegaard argues. The absence of evidence is precisely what counts. Only this will bring the best out of people. In the case of the banker, his regret and contrition will be freely given and he will redirect his life.

Compliance and surrender against all evidence are surely determinants of religious faith. Yet this faith is of a different quality than is faith in a loved one, or in money, or in the law. The latter forms create, at a certain point in the exchange between people, some form of evidence that keeps the interaction going or that puts an end to it when things go wrong. Counterfeit money, a broken heart, or transgressions of the law are hard to ignore. At certain points there will be empirical evidence, no matter how great the faith. Religious faith, on the contrary, shares all the features of all other forms of human faith, except its corroboration in the end by some form of evidence. Our banker is probably much more effectively corrected by devising a working financial regulation system that replaces the seductive deregulation allowing for hazardous risk-taking, than he would get from non-evidential faith. What religious faith implies theologically is something we do not elaborate upon here. We want to point out that religious faith too belongs to the stuff that human interactions are made of, and that it has been psychologically very effective in bringing

the best out of people, notwithstanding the fact that it is put to use and misuse in the absence of any confirming or non-confirming evidence.

Thus, we conclude that belief as an existential category produces beliefs of all sorts, and that religious faith is a special kind. Apparently, people are capable of surrender and devotion to something they cannot see, nor touch, nor hear. As something that transcends human beings, religion ordains a lifestyle in accordance with the appeal of a Greater Being. We are, however, dealing with a complete non-empirical state of affairs, based on nothing but inner convictions that can only be communicated among people equally involved in the same religious faith. Even the Gospels as truthful eye-witness accounts are affairs that the religious believer has to believe in. They are not as empirically evident as the devotion and tangible love present in a romantic lover.

Consequently, religious faith can be put at the service of those who have definite interest in organizing the deepest feelings and sentiments of others in accordance with their policies, because there is no control of its effects. Nothing of that sort can be said about, for example, marriage, money, or the law since the normativity involved has a clear empirical counterpart. In the best case, religion can be turned into something that draws the best from people. Due to the fact that the source is not human, religion's vitality emanates from something that really makes a difference and really has influence: God in the life of people. But because of no empirical check and balance whatsoever of its effects, religion can in the worst case be used for maintaining the status quo, in the interest of existing authorities and rulers. The question is whether in a modern era the threat of this worst-case scenario is still acceptable, particularly because religious authority is usually limited to only one subgroup in society: the men.

Gradually, the "civilizing offensive" of the West became secularized, as we have seen in Part One. It appears that in the West, religious belief and religious practice have withdrawn into the private spheres of people's lives and out of the public domain. Contrarily, in the world of Islam, predominantly because there is no separation of Church and state in Islam, religion continues to be the guiding light for all aspect of people's lives. Nevertheless, world religions also resemble each other. Chris Bayly (2004) makes the important point that major world religions tend to resemble each other the more they become involved in worldly affairs like state formation and imperial rule (see also Chapter 9). Whether Catholic, Protestant, Muslim, Buddhist, or Hindu, monks, priests, imams, and ayatollahs, that is to say, the officials of whatever type of religion, are indispensable in pointing out the direction to take. Places of worship tend to develop into advertising areas and have a great attraction to those who

have learned to believe unconditionally whatever the religious officials promulgate. Everywhere there is a power struggle about the proper path to follow. Even the God-free teachings of Buddha acquired religious features, and a caste of powerful monks controls faithful believers. In all religions this controlling group moralizes about existence, predominantly in terms of the obedience that is requested from those in the lower ranks of society. The creators of morality are themselves often exempted. When it is to their advantage they are also the moral transgressors. Religion often gives man-made morals the aura of timelessness and non-human origin. Yet, religious practices are (as much as those in the other domains we discussed) the result of behavioral coordination, rooted in the group, and based on the affective system and the automaticities of bodily practices that go with it.

Before we explain that in greater detail, we will first explore why religion has proven to be so persistent throughout the centuries.

## **Why is Religion so Persistent?**

Religion and belief in a god have a few indispensable and eradicable “functions,” if we may put it that way. We mean that religion can easily be employed in a broad array of functions, from buffering against the deplorable circumstances in which people may find themselves, up to justifications for paying almost divine tribute to fellow humans like King Willem-Alexander of the Netherlands, the Pope, or Robbie Williams. We give a brief overview of these functions.

### **Consolation**

The central argument in defense of religion is that human suffering is so extensive and unbearable that only the existence of God can provide a way out. God comprises the promise of a better life and redemption from this vale of tears. In life after death everything will be better. Earthly suffering is only a temporary ordeal. Who cannot imagine the situation of someone who is brought up completely non-religiously and who in times of disaster or great suffering sighs that she wished she could pray?

### **Empowerment**

The counterpart of consolation is empowerment. God and religion make people strong and resilient. This aspect reveals the personal dimension of

religion, since it is not an anonymous force but a personal being that assists in conquering setbacks and misfortune. Sacrifice and perseverance are easily connected with God as support and shelter. Especially people in harsh circumstances – for example, missionaries in the early days, doctors and nurses in developing countries – claim that their work was much easier to carry out and that they could endure adverse circumstances with the help of god. Suffering and hardship are much more bearable with the power of faith. Religion provides support in that respect for courageous behaviors.

### Sense and direction

In almost every apology for religion its contribution to a meaningful life is heralded as its most important value. Presumably, without God, our life would be empty and meaningless. In mainstream psychology of religion, religion's contribution to mental health is studied the most. Time and again articles appear in journals emphasizing how important religion is for mental health. Whether this contention is true or not is not our point here. The fact is that sense and direction in life are important for someone's well-being. Religious leaders claim that religion is very important in terms of giving meaning to life. Coincidence and purposelessness are effectively combated with the idea that everything finds its origin and fulfillment in God. Some even claim that special features of the cosmos can directly be derived from a divine plan. We have witnessed in recent times a revival of creationism; not so much in relation to the book of Genesis but in terms of intelligent design. In many cases, the discussion has subsided since it is impossible to prove the hand of God in creation. Some of the former adherents combined God and Darwin and pleaded for so-called "theistic evolution." Meaninglessness and a cosmos without purpose, that is, a cosmos that is the result of mere coincidence, is a bridge too far for many people. For them, God clearly is destiny.

### Depth and mystery

In his autobiography Klaus Mann (1942) deplores the fact that, in his intimate circle of friends, Marxism was almost obligatory:

I found it difficult to accept a formally prescribed philosophy that doesn't respond to my feelings and leaves my rational needs dissatisfied. A world-view, which is deprived of any trace of metaphysics, a system of thought in which there is no place for the category of transcendence, such a system lacks decisive elements. (Authors' translation of a Dutch version of the text.)

This aspect of religion is generally brought up in relation to the intrinsic mystery of existence. Often Hamlet is quoted where he says that there are more things in heaven and earth than are bound up in our philosophy. In Marxism, there was no room for mystery according to Mann. In this context religion is presented as a serious defense against the pretensions of science. Human affairs cannot be explained satisfactorily by scientific research; life is undoubtedly mysterious. The holy and the numinous will always be in our midst, as Rudolf Otto (1917) and Mircea Eliade (1957) argued. The sacred has always been put in opposition to the profane, in order to challenge people to be respectful and in awe for all that exists. Trembling before the overwhelming presence of mystery in all there is prevents an instrumental attitude towards other people and the world around us.

### Redemption, salvation, and promise

Religion has always been presented as a sacred utopia, a future dream that stimulates our endeavor to create a better world. It should redeem us from negative inclinations such as inertia. To sit back complacently is discouraged. The religious believer tries to avoid at all cost being satisfied with halfhearted measures but instead continuously transcends himself or herself and tries to improve the situation people are in. In this picture, religion is not a ticket to the afterlife, but an admonition to be responsible for a better life in the here and now. It is remarkable that even in the atheist philosophy of existentialism, both Jean-Paul Sartre (1946) and Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1947) emphasized what can be called the *mouvement de transcendance*: an attitude that leaves behind “bad faith” and that creates a situation in which human beings expand their possibilities and transcend themselves. Bad faith implies that one is satisfied with the state one is in with hardly any challenges or opportunities left, blaming one’s deplorable situation on external factors or fate. There is no personal responsibility in this case. Contrarily, the transcendental movement inspired by religion heightens someone’s responsibility. To set progressively higher goals is typically human. This transcendental movement is also emphasized against a ready-made blueprint of life in which a few people in charge design the world for the rest. Allowing for a constant challenge for all is the best antidote against the presumptuous attitude of a few.

### Remembering the futility of being human

In religious thought, human beings are constantly reminded that they are sinful, weak, futile, and lacking in devotion to duty. It is central to the

human condition that people always fail to live up to the mark and have fundamental shortcomings. In Christianity, salvation from original sin belongs to the core of human existence. Without God's grace nobody can thrive. The doctrine of original sin in fact holds that humans are marked by the tendency to neglect their divine destiny because they have done so right from the beginning, right after God created them, as the book of Genesis relates. It contains the warning that it can happen in everybody's life again. In Christianity human beings are seen as fundamentally guilty and sinful. That is not the case in all religions. Islam has no doctrine of original sin and in Buddhism the search for salvation from perennial desires presupposes no fundamental neglect. In this latter religion without a god, the core of the doctrine is about human inertia and lethargy. Islam emphasizes the tendency of humans to neglect their ultimate destination. In this religion human beings are nothing in the eye of Allah and they need His full protection. It is central to all monotheistic religions that humans are at the mercy of their god and that their own strivings are futile if they are not carried out under God's supervision. The fact that humans are nothing in and of themselves creates in the best case a receiving and active attitude in which all that is given to humans is treated with respect and obedience to God's laws. The earth and all that has been created has been given to humans on loan, so to speak, in order to preserve, protect, and use it. In the worst case, as Karl Marx (1844) pointed out, it leads to negligence and irresponsibility because the faithful await a better life given to them in the afterlife by God, and this is beyond their control. All they can do is be humble and wait to see if what has been promised really will happen.

### Human bonding and sense of community

This function has been strongly emphasized in defense of the multicultural society. Various government officials have called upon religion as an aid to creating a community in which people of all kinds of beliefs live together peacefully. To quote the former mayor of Amsterdam, Job Cohen: "The integration of some groups of people is achieved through religion. That is present-day reality. If we want to maintain a dialogue we have to create a religious infrastructure. Without mosques, temples, churches, and synagogues we won't succeed. Immigrants especially believe in an important role for religion; it is a means to create a sense of community that should not be underestimated." Cohen is in good company. Émile Durkheim, the French sociologist, argued in *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* that religion in its simplest form provides the members of

a group with a real feeling of power, inspiration, vitality, and sense of community. Those feelings come directly from the ritual practices ordained by religion. Durkheim presents examples of rituals among the Aborigines in which singing and dancing produces an ecstatic state to a degree of sheer frenzy. In such state of effervescence, the affective system becomes activated. The intensity of feeling is such that an outward cause is postulated to explain such an overwhelming experience. It is in this experience that the presence of the group is acutely felt. The sense of belonging is amplified and attributed to the workings of something higher than human which in turn feeds back into the very same feeling of belonging. In other words, in communal practice the gods are born. If those practices are repeated frequently enough, the entire community will thrive on a personally felt sense of belonging in every single member. In Durkheim's view, religion is not the source of society but it is the other way around: Society is the source of religion. Yet the practices that go with it create an intense bond in which the individual participates to such an extent that everybody becomes part of the group and is ready to contribute to its survival.

## Morals

The most disputed function of religion is at the same time the one that is mentioned most. Without God there is no morality, so the argument goes. Religion provides a distinction between good and evil which, because of its divine origin, can be deployed most effectively. The divine source of Rule of Law guarantees greater obedience even by those in charge. If Rule of Law originates from human sources, it can be criticized too easily. In the history of mankind, there have been two important turning points in the calibration of human normativity. The first goes back to the so-called "axial era" (800–200 BC), in which a new normative system was invented that did away with the usual habit of only caring for the people of one's own tribe. In the bands of hunters and gatherers, but also in small settlements, neighboring groups were generally considered to be competitors for food and supplies. The first normative invention was to include such external groups in attempts to improve the living conditions of one's own group. The inclusion of more and more external groups has been an ethic accomplishment of the highest order. Gods were used to corroborate such inventions. Christianity was the second turning point by proposing that even one's enemy had to be included. The vicissitudes of these accomplishments somehow present the points of great achievements in the history of religion. Much religious preaching goes into explaining the moral obligation to not only love "thy neighbor" but also those living in



foreign lands, and even your enemy. Although it is highly probable that both moral accomplishments are man-made, religious officials have usurped the human origin of this particular normativity by attributing it to God. In this respect, religion has occupied the normative domain from its inception. It has created the firm conviction that without religion, that is to say, without a foundation of good and bad in God's laws, no morality would be possible. To replace the Ten Commandments by clear-cut man-made rules and regulations has proved to be very difficult.

### Legitimizing and justification

Jared Diamond (1997) offers evidence for the claim that religions were initiated in order to legitimize the unavoidable "kleptocracy" of the ruling class in sedentary gangs or tribes. To make possible the establishment of a ruling class that could stay idle and have others work for them, it was necessary to make people do the work as if they were intrinsically motivated. It is not difficult to see this aspect of power in all sorts of religions. This justification was probably not what the founders of a religion had in mind. It may be that they were predominantly concerned with keeping people on the right track and motivating them to efface themselves for the common good of all. We once more follow Chris Bayly in his claim that as soon as the world religions started to resemble each other in the period when the various empires of the globe were established – whether it was among the emperors of China, the Mogul emperors of India, or the kings and princes of Europe – religion or religion-like ideological systems became an important instrument in legitimizing or at least supporting worldly rule. People's sentiments were certainly involved in establishing this religiously sanctioned order.

The affective patterning of behavior is crucial for the interplay of ecclesiastical and worldly powers. Benjamin Kaplan (2007) amply illustrates it when he argues that people's religious sentiments could easily be manipulated in favor of a particular form of worldly rule. Also, Francis Fukuyama (2011) provides decisive arguments in favor of the important role that religion played in the origins of political order. He even claims that without religion in the Christian or Muslim world Rule of Law could not have been established. In his account of Indian rulership, Fukuyama initiates a polemic about economic interests versus religious ideas as the sources of social change. He claims a separate influence of religion, apart from economic factors. His prime example of a religion that justified the dominance of a small elite over the rest of society is the Brahmanic religion, which goes as far back as two millennia before our era. It was the

power of ritual at the top of the hierarchy that made a difference. Such rituals were deployed to control people's intimate personal lives. Fukuyama even claims that counterattacks on the Brahmanic religion, for example from Buddhism, preserved this ritual power, which was only seriously contested by Islamic and British rule. The caste or varna system turned into a religiously sanctioned immutable stratification system which up to this day brands India as a rigidly hierarchical society.

The point Fukuyama wants to make is clear: Religious ideas have political consequences. In his book he postulates religion at the outset as the eminent source of juridical order. He does not, however, see world religions as originating from the complete intermingling of religious rule and human societal order. Contrarily, Jonathan Kirsch (2004) has demonstrated how the establishment of monotheistic religions is intimately related with the establishment of princely rule. The reigns of Akhnaton in Egypt and of King Josiah in Judah are thoroughly connected with the empowerment of monotheism, Kirsch contends.

### Religion as a source of identity

Religion is an important source of how people would like to be. Throughout the history of religion members of various religions have argued among themselves and with members of other religions about who was the most orthodox and who was deviant. Such disputes about who really could call themselves Catholic, Dutch Reformed, Alevit, Sunni, Shia, Sikh, Hindu, and so on are responsible for the proliferation of religious denominations, which in turn can be used to anchor someone's identity. Ritual and doctrine feed into these core sentiments and fortify group boundaries. One can criticize the doctrine and even the rituals, but the sense of belonging is just like feelings in general: they are preferences, in this case for one group or another, that do not need inferences (see Zajonc 1980 in the previous chapter). Rationality can be powerless in the domain of identity. Maybe this is one of religion's strongest assets; it gives people something to hold on to. Some have wondered why religion persists in the United States, whereas in Europe it generally is on the decline. It most probably has to do with the conspicuous feature of American religious life: It has developed into a commodity for the creation of someone's identity. In places like Springfield, Missouri there is roughly one church for every 1,000 inhabitants, as Niall Ferguson (2011) has related. In explaining where Max Weber got his "Protestant ethic" from, Ferguson recounts that on his journey through the United States in 1904, Weber saw that religion gave the American people a real sense of who they are: the good flock of

God-fearing, diligent, hard-working citizens. And, moreover, if you are an immigrant entering a strange inhospitable town by yourself it certainly is a blessing to find your companions in faith awaiting you and welcoming you with open arms, without any reservation, because you are one of them.

By way of conclusion to this section, there are still two functions of religion left that do not directly derive from religion as belief, practice, and identity. They are related to the proto-scientific features of myths and explanatory tales that are told to unravel the mysterious aspects of existence.

### Proto-science

In their famous book *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno (1947) argued in favor of a proto-scientific role of myths and religions. They function as a pre-phase of scientific explanations of enigmatic phenomena in human life. Creation myths or cosmologies provided the first explanations for why there is something instead of nothing, why human beings are crowding the earth, why this earthquake happened, etc. In Islam, some scholars attribute to Allah the prediction of inventions in the life sciences. They point out that the Koran contains hidden allusions to scientific accomplishments. In Surah 71, verses 13–14, for example, creation in various stages is postulated, which is used by Muslim scholars as proof of Allah's omniscience. In this way, every opposition between science and religion is silenced. Other scholars claim an important role for religion as a stimulating force in subjugating the earth and its mysteries to human scrutiny. The most striking example is the defense of religion by Dinesh D'Souza (2007), in which theology is acclaimed as the most important source of Western science. The proofs of God's existence exercised by Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, and Anselm were based on reason alone. No recourse was taken to something supernatural. Such exercises in reasoning sharpened the scholars' minds and formed the basis of Western science, D'Souza claims.

### Reflection on humans

Human beings bestowed with the highest power are presented as a dim reflection of God's unfathomable wisdom, to the effect that what in fact is clearly human wisdom and what is mere personal influence is firmly anchored in a preordained sanctified order. In this way, God and religion have been used to glorify the possessors of merely earthly power and to

immunize them against criticism. Symbols of national states like kings and queens are protected from attempts to put their power into perspective. In this manner, ordinary people are presented as emissaries of God on earth. In a not so distant past, kings were literally God on earth, and up till this day the pope is the infallible knower of God's intentions. How we treat those in power derives directly from the awe and respect attributed to God. It is customary, for instance, in most countries of the Western world to request that important civil servants take an oath in God's name when they are appointed. It would be unthinkable to lay out the red carpet for the president, the king, or any other high official, were it not that their humble status as normal human beings is covered up by vesting them with a share in God's transcendence. Pop stars, movie stars, football players, and other idols are bestowed with a comparable honor. Without behavioral patterns derived from religious practice, this kind of reverence would likely not be possible.

## Criticism and Resilience

The functions mentioned so far have been inspirational for the worship of God, Allah, Jaweh, etc. They all have been severely criticized as well. In some cases, a clear alternative was presented, as in the case of Marxism, which is in fact a secular religion. Another blow to divinity was to argue that morals without religion *could* exist, or to argue that a stoic acceptance of life's absurdity should be preferred over the fantasy world of religion. To abolish God and religion entirely has proven to be very difficult, however. Every time one function was blown apart, another one arose, just like the heads of the Hydra. Without pretending to be exhaustive, we now outline a few attempts to seriously criticize religion as a benevolent system.

### Opium of the people

Religion has been severely criticized as the source of consolation and the promise of a better world by Ludwig Feuerbach (1841) and his student Karl Marx (1844). They put religion in the wastebasket of history. It is well known that Karl Marx considered religion to be the opium of the people. Not *for* the people, because that would imply that people are deliberately lured into a dream world and are drugged with promising stories about a better afterlife. According to Marx's assault on religion, people themselves create a palliative by viewing the world as a place to

practice the transition to a better life, not to be consumed in the here and now on this earth but later on in heaven. In the end, only God will provide people with the fulfillment of their desires in case they fall short in realizing their own wishes. Heaven is the place where it will all happen, and to get there, people will have to endure the hardships of earthly life. The story of Job in the Old Testament exemplifies what the attitude should be. In ultimate resignation and convinced of God's good intentions, human beings have to accept His intentions. Job is robbed of all his possessions and his friends see this as a sign of God's punishment for his sins. Job, however, persists in his conviction that he has lived according to God's commandments. So God is unnecessarily cruel. In the end, Job finds consolation in God and endures his misery by simply accepting God's presence in his life.

For many, Marx's assault on religion was effective. His call to human beings that they should take the initiative for establishing a better world, by no longer interpreting it but by really changing it, was followed up by many in the first half of the twentieth century. Yet, after the collapse of the Soviet empire at the end of that century, the fiasco of the political system based on this belief became all the more clear. It has not been a successful revolution at all. Religion as consolation and relief remained as firm as ever. We cannot deny that systems, like the communist ideal state, which promised prosperity in the actual world, cleared the road for even more extreme violence than encountered in religious circles. Violence defended on grounds related to an atheistic worldview (and which in that respect is even more religiously zealous than the plague it tried to conquer), discredited the entire system. Since 1989, the more moderate variants of the same system have been in jeopardy as well, which has left the world robbed of an ideology that tried to replace religious promise.

### Religion as wish fulfillment

Sigmund Freud (1927) launched a similar assault on religion as consolation and support. In psychoanalytic jargon, religion is wish fulfillment. God is all that humans are not: loving, caring, kind-hearted, merciful, fair, and just. He is fulfillment in person, up to the highest degree, and He responds to all our wishes. God unconditionally loves every single human being, provided that His way is followed. Any deviation of the prescribed path will elicit the wrath of an angry god who – as some believers claim – has the power to punish humans with earthquakes, tsunamis, volcanic eruptions, hurricanes, famine, and diseases. The core objection of Freud to this kind of religious belief is that people are no longer challenged to take their

lives in their own hands. They are fobbed off with a childish desire for an ever-cherishing caregiver. That is their only possibility to obtain a better life after death. By uncritically submitting themselves to a God-given order, all resistance against pain and injustice becomes meaningless from the outset. Moreover, it is claimed such resistance deteriorates sooner or later into a downright opposition against God's grace. Even suffering and misery are accepted as an ordeal out of God's hands. For God's grace takes an unfathomable course and gives guidance to the true believers in ways they will never understand.

In psychoanalysis such attitudes are considered a flight from personal responsibility. This kind of criticism was more or less silenced after psychoanalysis lost its scientific credibility and was no longer broadly accepted. Its persistence and revival in literary circles and some philosophical quarters testifies to the fact that some people still model their lifestyle after psychoanalysis, as for instance wonderfully exemplified in the movies of Woody Allen. Yet its general relevance has died out and so has psychoanalytic religion-bashing. A caring entity in a world beyond is still luring people into an easy life without really having to take responsibility for their own fate.

## Utopia

Throughout history alternatives have been developed to religion as challenge, power, redemption, salvation, and promise. For the sacred utopia of religion, secular alternatives have been devised ever since Plato, all against the background of a disastrous present and the doom that is hanging over it. They serve the same functions as religion, however, in presenting an ideal as an alternative to the present. Famous examples of utopias that follow up on Plato's *Republic*, in which philosophers are the ruling elite, include Thomas More's *Utopia*, Francis Bacon's *The New Atlantis*, Tommaso Campanella's *The City of the Sun*, and Jeremy Bentham's *Panopticon*. Hans Achterhuis (1998) has profoundly criticized the derailment of utopias into totalitarianism because those newly designed worlds always involve a ruling intellectual class that wants to recreate reality in accordance with their own concepts. In that respect power based on religious legitimation is rivaled by equally unjustifiable claims for secular authority. While religion at least involves a designer of transcendental proportions, the philosophers' choice always involves clearly human power.

Achterhuis (2010) warns against Ayn Rand and her prophet Alan Greenspan who inflated the free market to monstrous proportions with devastating consequences for the world economy. In the United States, Rand is widely known as the author of a capitalist utopia written down in her 1957 novel *Atlas Shrugged*. Less well known is that Greenspan and other US citizens selected this novel as the most important book after the Bible, according to a joint survey conducted in 1991 by the Library of Congress and the Book of the Month Club. It foresees a liberal free market and a small government that minimizes interference with that market. Rand and Greenspan are both heralded as the champions of a new utopia in which mere competition and desire enable an individual to face and conquer the human condition. In this context, heroism, personal initiative, total reform, purity, sexuality, and labor are woven into the fabric of a new society. It was an inspiration for the neoconservative designers of a better world, who believed that alleviating the human condition would be achieved by trusting the self-regulatory power of the markets. Achterhuis claims, however, that the human condition, which is essentially a condition of extreme shortcomings, can never be overcome. Along with every successful design a damaged form arises as well, which is inevitably based on human frailty. In other words, worldly utopias are no real alternative to religion because the strong side of religion is ostensibly denied. That strong side involves the continuous awareness of human frailty and the danger of creating a blueprint for reality. These ready-made blueprints keep people from striving for improvement time and again and from acknowledging the mutual practices in which they operate (identified by Durkheim as an essential feature of religion), and instead lead them to idleness. In that respect religion succeeds where utopias fail: the only way to combat human failure is a relentless exhortation to do things better all the time. Nothing seems to achieve that better than religion.

### Criticizing the binding power of religion

Triumphantly, the critics of religion point to the increasing secularization of the modern world. In the West, they see a widespread drop in the membership of the established churches. Yet, emancipation from the trammels of churchly patronage should not be equated with secularization. A secular outlook on life is difficult to maintain since the *Katholicos*, that is, the universal inclusion claimed by the Roman Catholic Church, and the *Ummah*, the unified Islamic world, are still presented as a lively ideal of belonging. To eradicate the identity that goes along with these notions



has proved to be very hard. Religious practice has undergone a deritualization process, which has put religiously designed rites under severe pressure. Funeral rituals, however, have proved very resistant in the West, particularly the Catholic variant, and on a world scale, religious belonging and ritualization are endemic. One only needs to travel through Asia, Africa, or Latin America to see the power of religion at times of transition in people's lives. Where old religious forms fell into oblivion, new ways of dealing with such transitions were invented, testifying to the fact that people cannot do without it.

### Criticizing religion as the source of morality

Moral patterning of behavior is even more difficult to achieve outside the religious domain. In defense of liberalism against Islamic fundamentalism it is generally acknowledged – at least in northwest Europe – that liberal ideas are in fact heavily influenced by the Christian doctrine. Even unbelievers often mention morals and religion in one breath. The branch of the Enlightenment movement that began with Spinoza and developed into a radical variant (see also Chapter 9) can be viewed as an early effort to separate morality and religion by grounding morality in a secular ethical order. Yet this move turned out to be a failure, since it was soon replaced by the moderate variant in which religious thinking seamlessly merged with secular thinking about morals. As a consequence, the domain of morality remained more or less occupied by religion. Religion was the prime source through which the things that really matter in life became available to thought and could be expressed in terms of a moral imperative. Christ's injunction "to love thy neighbor like thyself" as well as the Ten Commandments contain an unalienable appeal that has permeated morality throughout. To transfer this appeal to a secular variety of morals proved to be so difficult that we are tempted to suggest that religion holds morality hostage.

Yet, such a variety is most needed in a world in which religion has seemed to lose its grip on the day-to-day patterning of behavior. In former times churches and church officials even concerned themselves with people's behavior in the bedroom. Married couples had to make love in accordance with religiously inspired prescriptions. It shows how much religion penetrated the private sphere. Although it is a blessing that such obnoxious interference is absent nowadays, many people's intuitions with respect to unborn life and life's ending are still very much religiously inspired and monitored. Many attempts for a secular shaping in, for example, euthanasia movements or legalization of abortion still encounter

much resistance. We are not implying that this resistance is wrong; our point is that these domains are still religiously occupied. But also in the domain of property and wealth (what percentage in bonuses can bankers take? What is the maximum wage at the top of a company compared to that of the lowest paid workers?), devising a morality in which religiously inspired notions of responsible care for other people's well-being are replaced by secular imperatives, proves to be very hard. Little wonder, then, that many people still believe (with Dostoyevsky – as suggested in *The Brothers Karamazov*) that without God anything goes.

### The source of meaning

In relation to natural science, religion no longer claims any higher knowledge about the cosmos, how the world came into existence, and what the nature of the universe really is. Except for some pockets of religiously inspired anti-Darwinian sentiments, even most believers are convinced that scientific explanations have replaced, or at least should replace, the explanatory tales and myths of the Holy Books in whatever world religion. Yet, how different is the situation with respect to the behavioral sciences. As soon as the issue is brought up of organizing society or people's private life in accordance with the scientific insights of the behavioral sciences, intellectuals, but also the general public, back off and refrain from scientifically guided education. In that regard, religion is still an unbeaten rival. Some say it has to do with the status of the social and behavioral sciences. Those sciences involve as much the general public's opinions as scientific evidence for certain educational measures.

Once education is brought up, or psychological development – and in that context the undeniable importance of safe attachment as an established fact of science – people seem to almost fear to draw the consequences of scientifically informed upbringing of children. To put it more precisely: There is no intervention, based on systematic behavioral science, in the upbringing of children or the arrangements of the family. It seems that most people would not appreciate such intervention, no matter how useful the knowledge on which it is based.

This reluctance is similar to what was brought up against the logicians and mathematicians of the Vienna Circle. In their famous manifesto (1929), a radical scientific worldview was promoted against fascism and superstition. It was severely criticized for being a secular doctrine of redemption. Since then, Ludwig Wittgenstein's solution has been embraced in which religion and morality constitute a province of meaning to which science, as a separate province of meaning, has no legitimate access. In this view,

life in accordance with high standards of morality can only be illustrated, but not implemented, by means of scientific insights.

### Legitimizing male dominance

Religious justification of power has become almost obsolete in modern Western society. The time has gone when the church kept the people ignorant, the wealthy classes kept the people poor, and the rulers kept the people powerless; and those three in concert kept society the way it was. The same can be said of male dominance. It does not find any justification in religion anymore, no matter how much this was the case at the inception of the world religions. That does not imply, however, that there are no traces left in any religion of such male dominance.

The preference for male dominance in earlier times may not be very surprising. Male power appeared to be necessary for survival. In the axial era, in which the foundation for some sort of primal religion was laid, most communities lived under harsh conditions with limited resources and threatening circumstances. Armed protection was in great demand. Myths abound in which the power of men is sanctified and declared indispensable for the continuation of the human race. One need not be a Freudian to interpret the competition for the tallest buildings in the world as the spreading of some sort of a territorial mark. Men are masters at covering up their indispensability by emphasizing their biologically superior virility, strength, bravery, and endurance. In contrast to what is almost accepted as a biological given, we would like to offer the suggestion that for successful procreation *adult* male participation is not really required. Easy to manipulate, young but sexually mature boys suffice to maintain a healthy society of women and boys. Adult men are in principle superfluous. One may wonder whether this is perhaps the reason why the symbolization of adult male power is endemic in all societies throughout history. Compared to the symbolization of female power that is equally indispensable in the procreation process, men have grossly exaggerated their contribution to the human race in symbolic representations of their procreative power. Our suggestion is tongue in cheek, of course. We do not want to join Freud in devising a new myth – this time not of the primal horde but of the powerless adult male who is superfluous in the procreation process. What we do like to stipulate is that religion certainly has been instrumental in maintaining masculine power by arranging a minimal role for women and reserving the priestly role strictly for men.

The three main monotheist religions, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, are thoroughly involved in what can be termed the declaration of indis-

pensability of the male sex. Men were put in prime positions, and became invested with the highest authority in religious matters. Women were excluded. God was in fact male; not so much as a public image, because the claim can be made that God is neutral, but in the description of the properties: a loving father, omnipotent ruler, and lawgiver. Women were marginalized from the outset. The almost uncritical acceptance of male domination in churchly matters in all world religions definitely contributes to maintaining men's powerful position worldwide. The comparatively small pockets in which religion is clearly separated from the state remained powerless in the face of so much religiously inspired authority. Religious authority is still decisive in moral affairs around the globe. Its power has not diminished despite the fact that most people prefer to live in a secular order. It is one of the unresolved paradoxes of religion's strength.

### Status

The way religion reflects on a human being and gives him or her almost divine power developed into one of religion's most visible functions. Religion-like rituals around the transference of power, its maintenance, and its exertion directly derive from the way religion operates. Examples are the taking of solemn vows in the name of God and the honor given to mere mortals in power, which in fact involves their deification. Sometimes it happens literally, as is the case in Japan where the emperor enjoys divine status. Respect for the Dutch king or British queen would probably not exist without the association with religious practices, past or present. The same is true for movie stars, sports heroes, actors and actresses, and in some cases even scholars with star status. They are paid exorbitant amounts of money because of our belief in their godlike status. That is why we are in favor of the introduction of a celebrity tax that would limit their inordinate incomes, made possible by a starstruck general populace. It is hard to imagine that this attribution of high status could have been successful without the paraphernalia taken over from the religious sphere: Religious practices appear to be the mold for the deification of celebrities and the creation of distances of all sorts.

The artistic accomplishments of the great civilizations of the world would never have flourished without a divine world for which the architecture, paintings, and sculptures are outstanding pieces of advertisement. Its benefactors would never have acquired the renowned greatness they enjoy without art fulfilling that role. Without the gods, imperial power and splendor would not have existed.

Thus it can hardly be surprising that religion became a source of status. Over the centuries people developed a sensibility for the numinous, the holy, and the mysteriousness of creation. It is a sensibility that can easily be transferred to the earthly representatives or representations of a deity. It functions as the source of behavioral patterns in which submission and in-depth commitment prevail. Along this line the adoration of those in power or those displaying a highly admired competence in arts, sports, or science can be employed to impress the common people. Without the glitter and glamour of this almost transcendental aura, people are too ordinary to be really believed and worshipped.

### Religious pugnacity

The single individual will have difficulties in a world which becomes ever more unsafe, complicated, and disorderly. The shelter that religion offers makes it all the more attractive. No matter how unreasonable religion is, it provides people who somehow want the same from life with a place to belong. It provides the people with a “sacred canopy” as Peter Berger (1967) has argued. Religion offers a place to settle sensitive matters between people. It can be done in a safe and harmless way, but to hold on to certain regulations too strictly can deteriorate into pugnacity and violence. The Enlightenment assault on religion in Islamist circles reveals once more how resilient religion in fact is. Islamists developed a firm bastion against modernization and the alleged Westernization that automatically goes with it, at least in the eyes of fundamentalist believers. The romantic side of religion as a source of status and respect has successfully been deployed in criticizing the pretenses of rational cosmopolitical enlightenment and world citizenship. In that respect religion inspires excessive violence all over the planet. It has been that way in the past and it still is. Religion is sometimes the source of local behavioral patterns in which weaponry, intimidation of those who do not believe and who do not share the commitment of the faithful, and exclusion, prevail over tolerance and all-inclusive acceptance. The abstract *Katholicos* of the Christians and the equally abstract *Ummah* of Islam often cannot counteract the sentimental locality of religious commitment supported by a predominantly masculine organization.

### Religion Revisited

We have assessed religion’s resilience and argued for its inevitability; not in terms of its transcendental truth, about which we can make no claims in a

book about psychology, but in terms of people's zest for and commitment to it. Religion is really about the hearts and minds of people and about their sense of belonging. Faith inspires them to carry out actions of great sacrifice and it is often full of practices which at first sight seem arbitrary but in the end help to construct people's identities in a very strong sense.

A general discouragement of religion misses the point of the unavoidable affective involvement of people in matters of hope, love, consolation, awe, and so forth. Moreover, especially with respect to normative issues that require group calibration, as feelings cannot be tuned anywhere else, the patterning of behavior along religious lines has been vitally important in virtually every society. The "functions" we discussed above provide the examples. One can even claim, as many have done before us, that religion often gives a clue as to what traditionally has been considered really important in human life. As such, the functions we described could set the agenda for a type of modernization that can no longer be called "Western," since the best that world religions have to offer stipulates universal human needs and valuable positions on normative issues. No assault on religion's main functions has been fatal, and no secular alternative has proved successful in beating its religious counterpart.

Abolition of religion – or, more precisely, of what religious patterns accomplish in the affective lives of people – is a nonstarter. Qualification of religion in terms of its viability, or contrarily in terms of the way in which it reinforces cultural arrests, proves all the more mandatory. We now discuss two accounts of religion that mark the explanatory plane on which the scientific dealings with religion take place: On the one hand biological explanations and on the other hand explanations in terms of socioeconomic control and pressure. Both approaches are current in present-day discussions about religion.

### A biological explanation of religion

Some have proposed blaming religion's persistence on environmental selective pressure. Richard Dawkins (2006) claims that the various types of religion evolved as a psychological byproduct of the mind's natural susceptibility or credulity. Modules that account for this function were wired in by natural selection. The story is well known: A given feature, such as in this case credulity, was somehow beneficial to the survival of individuals who possessed it. It thereby increased their chance of procreation, including the genetic endowment for being credulous. As a result, credulous individuals came to dominate the population. Credulity would have existed long before the axial era, when religion's inventors and founders built on this feature. Dawkins favors *memes* as the producers of

religion's specific features. As examples, he includes the ideas of life after death, heavenly reward, reward for believing against all evidence, disgust for heretics, virtuous surrender, a feeling of moral superiority, and religious advertisement in arts and music.

Michael Shermer (2011) comes to Dawkins' aid. He postulates "patternicity," the tendency to find meaningful patterns in meaningless noise, as the main source of religion. It is believed to be a capacity with some unmistakable evolutionary advantage. To mistake a rustle in the grass for a predator is much more advantageous than taking a real predator to be just a breeze through the grass, Shermer argues. In the same vein, thinking that some patterns are real is safer than remaining a skeptic. In his own words: "Natural selection will favor strategies that make many incorrect causal associations in order to establish those that are essential for survival and reproduction" (p. 62).

Yet the "belief engines", as Shermer calls our brains, do not operate in a void. We repeat here our general position on the role of biological mechanisms. Genes and biological makeup are always involved in whatever human capacity. But as was the case with language, we may have a biological (including a genetic) capacity for it, but what would it be without a concrete training context for this or that particular language? Belief again involves the tuning of behavior amid other members of the group, and includes affectively propelled motivations and bodily-enacted presentation of self. Both drag rationality and propositional knowledge along, so to speak, and make religious "identifying" a powerful determinant of human action. Religious belief therefore also involves automated behaviors that may have a high impact on performance and rituals. Seeing things in such a way, the best of biology and psychology are preserved and put to use in understanding religious behavior.

Researchers like Ramachandran and colleagues (1997) have argued for the existence of precise brain areas involved in religious experience. This type of research connects with early findings by Michael Peterson on the influence of temporal lobe epilepsy in the production of feelings of oneness with nature, awe, and submission to forces greater than oneself. Peterson claims to be able to elicit such feelings by applying an artificial magnetic field to this brain area. Some regions in the brain appear to produce extreme feelings of comfort, as if being in the hands of God. The mystic experiences of Nirvana, of near-death experiences, of being in peace with oneself, or of being part of a larger whole have also been linked to the workings of such a "religion module."

Nonetheless, to postulate the single brain as the beginning and end of religious experience runs against the idea that human interaction is the



point of application for all human endeavors, including the way in which brains in the plural come to operate. Body 1 is unmistakably involved in the production of religious experience. It belongs to the technical possibilities of the human body to have extreme intense experiences of belonging, wholeness, completeness, being cared for, and being part of the entire cosmos. Techniques stemming from the Eastern repertoire of bodily practices through which the body can be trained in yoga, Tantra, qigong, meditation, and martial arts are clear proof of how far human beings can go in acquiring certain skills to intensify their experiences.

Such techniques belong to the age-old tradition of the orthopraxis of the master and the apprentice through which the body is perfected. Such training enables people to experience life to the full, even to such an extent that it can be called a religious – or at least transcendental – experience. Yet it does not happen without training in the group of already experienced practitioners. The styling and shaping of behavior in rituals and other practices occurs everywhere, partially in order to intensify group belonging and the sense of community. In that respect, religion belongs to the wider domain of human experiences with a normative character and it contributes to the authentication of experiences. To be sure, Catholic or Protestant services have rituals but they do not involve so much the embodied presence and actions of the worshippers. One wonders whether that has its effects on the sense of belonging and identity. Also, extreme experiences with a religious ring to them can be aroused by all sorts of substances and drugs. In primitive religions, these substances were deliberately invoked to bring about extraordinary experiences; yet again, it often takes the group of skilled others to learn what to experience in the proper sense, as we argued in Chapter 3.

### Pressure and control

The establishment of religions throughout the history of mankind has been accompanied by the acceptance of events that were extraordinary, often fearful or in other ways impressive, created by a person with overwhelming charisma, and so on. Such events are clearly psychological in nature and should be treated as such. But again, the kind of psychology that is needed locates religion in the coordination of behaviors within a community of experts. In it, common experiences and behavioral patterns are produced that create a society that is manageable and productive. As Jared Diamond (1997) argues, the behavioral and affective patterning that religions establish ensure, among people at the lower levels of society, a strong belief that the present order is the only viable and acceptable one.

Kleptocracy and the gathering of goods at the expense of the people at lower levels of society is justified this way, which then of course is severely criticized by other religious leaders who detest this kind of power play in a religious context. One may add to Diamond's argument that the latter may explain the occurrence of schisms in churchly and religious matters. The point is that the powerless need to be sensitized to a free acceptance of their submissive position in society. They should feel the inevitability of being the ones who have to do the hard work and who have to obey the people in charge. These experiences need to become real and tangible, and they need to be backed by the community.

Moreover, in order to create proper involvement in battles, to mobilize sufficient motivation for the production of food, or to accept the Rule of Law in full confidence that the best of each member needs to be given to the community, appropriate feelings must be elicited without the necessity to reset the existing order each time. Religion has been very effective in the production of the appropriate feelings and sentiments in these respects. In the best case a communal practice was created on the basis of voluntary contributions, in which leaders and followers became natural phenomena.

As soon as the religious authorities of the monotheistic world religions aligned with the secular authorities great pains were taken to provide the resulting order with a solid source of the Rule of Law, or more broadly with a morality that surpasses human origin. Rule of Law as a form of justice to which, without exception, everybody is subjected, including the highest authority, like an emperor or king, presupposes something that transcends the human legislator. Postulating preexisting laws of divine origin has proven to be a very successful avenue to a normative rule of law, involving everybody, including the people in power. Francis Fukuyama (2011) has documented what religious-based Rule of Law meant for the development of political systems throughout the world. It was truly a blessing, he claims. By comparing China with the Christian empires of the West, Fukuyama concludes that a transcendental entity was the best source of restrictions on the ruler's behavior. Without a divine origin, patrimonial familial interests could prevail, even over lawgiving practice. Patrimonialism makes every subject powerless, because the worldly ruler can make no exception to the rule, as has been endemic among China's emperors. The Chinese system of Rule of Law was from its inception to the present day based on a bureaucracy led by self-interest, according to Fukuyama. At best, this shaped the moral sense of the emperor (or the Party in the present time) in accordance with the common good for the people. In the worst case, however, it clearly resulted in ruthless arbi-

trariness. The interesting claim of Fukuyama is that a god at the top of the hierarchy as the prime moral anchor in fact paved the way for modern, secular rule of law. A divine source of law has been of utmost psychological value at the European royal courts, as a means to create a normative order and to get the rulers accustomed to submit to it themselves.

## Conclusion

In all four domains of the previous chapters of Part Two (sex, status, age, and ethnicity), there is a worldwide desire for behavioral practices in which scientifically informed inspiration beats tradition, no matter what someone's personal belief is. In our opinion, the same is true for religion. Fanaticism and male dominance are a clear hindrance to the propagation of the good life. Religious strife and tolerance that have in the past shaped the sensitivities of the people in the North Atlantic region are nowadays enmeshed in a constant battle worldwide, because of behavioral patterns that are still endemic in religious circles. Fanaticism and aggression in religion involve a dynamic between beliefs, practices, and authentic identities. These beliefs and practices produce a very definite sense of belonging on the part of believers, with the exclusion of others who do not endorse the same beliefs and practices. Paradoxically, as we have seen, religious patterns create, apart from a very *resistant* community, also a very *malleable* community, as enforced identities result from the appropriation of the embodied practices of those who want to join.

In our opinion, the world is now on the brink of creating a normative order that incorporates the best faith has to offer and that at the same time keeps pace with innovation and the possibility of a good life for everyone. Blind faith has been severely criticized by the behavioral science that revealed some of its workings. A quick glance at what happened to the institutional power of the Catholic Church in the Netherlands after the Second Vatican Council reveals that the solidity of people's faith was weakened in less than half a generation. While grandfathers or fathers still worried about what would happen if the weekly observance on Sunday was neglected and if Friday's fasting was ignored, their children and grandchildren abolished such obligations in no time.

Sometimes it is argued that secularization has gone so far that it has become a kind of belief or faith itself. Religions then draw attention to the fact that there must be more between heaven and earth. It would serve the confrontation between believers and unbelievers if the parties

involved would demand at least some form of evidence for their belief, in terms of convincing arguments about religion's functions and its effects. We are not talking about the evidence of Kierkegaard's Green Bird type, of course, but modern human life expects from the endorsers of religious convictions some form of convincing evidence of its wholesome role in modern life. That is to say, not a partisan position, but rather a universal appeal. The beneficial consequence of such a demand would be that nobody, including someone from the lower levels of society, has to accept a form of moralism that does not have the normative hallmark of effectiveness. Too often, however, morals are adhered to that above all make clear who belongs to the privileged group of people who know what really matters in life. A better world is only possible if that tendency is suppressed. The design of a better world should therefore never be left in the hands of a select group of people who decide for others what makes life worth living.

In the long history of the survival of world religions, not even Enlightenment criticism could damage its impact. In fact, a compromise was devised between religion and an enlightened view on liberation from religion's trammels. Yet, religion's say in moral affairs was preserved. Blind faith was only criticized by cognitive science in attempts to understand the role of belief in human affairs, particularly with respect to the deployment of belief in arranging power claims. In some parts of the Western world churchly authority has been effectively dethroned and it no longer controls people's private lives. Many elderly people still remember the anxiety and fear that surrounded the violation of religious prescriptions. It is not the physical sciences but the behavioral sciences which have been indispensable in an attempt to neutralize that fear. On this score there is still much to gain.

## Notes

- 1 This feature of moral guidance because of some special knowledge should be clearly distinguished from normativity as discussed in Part One. The knowledge that some elites seem to possess, has its source in moral elevation over the ignorant masses and is as such not the basis of normativity but of moralism. Moralism presupposes hierarchy. Normativity, on the contrary, operates in an egalitarian way. In discussions about moral teaching, the element of hierarchy is often left out. In many cases, the moral exhortations are for lay people; they often do not seem to apply to the teachers themselves.
- 2 Pierre Bourdieu abhorred "les grands simplificateurs," those who quickly glance at a text and then think they understand it. He therefore made his text

deliberately difficult, in order to shake off those simplifiers. Kierkegaard before him did something similar. He even had his books written by someone else, in this case Johannes Climacus, to make clear to the reader that what this man wrote was to be taken seriously, even by Kierkegaard himself.

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# Part Three

## Psychology and Globalization

In this final part of the book we bring the conceptual tools and our selection of five domains to bear on the issue of behavioral globalization. We argue that experimentation with the lifestyles of the West has been much more appealing to other parts of the world than have economy or prosperity per se. Despite some severe criticism, civilizing rivals still tend to look to the West with respect to behavioral innovation. It is to this aspect of behavioral globalization we turn now.



# A Psychology of Globalization

What has a psychological analysis of patterns in behavior and mutually tuned practices to offer for a globalizing world? In Part One, we argued that a conceptualization of the tensions between different peoples in terms of clashing cultures might present interesting metaphors but no real understanding of the psychological and social mechanisms at hand. In the earlier chapters, we also argued that in any society there are at least five behavioral domains in which a patterning of behavior is mandatory to enable different people to live together. This styling of behavior and experiences takes place predominantly in the practices of local, intrinsic social groups, by means of mutual coordination of actions and experiences. We have also seen that this is above all an embodied affair. Not only is someone's bodily comportment to a great extent shaped in concordance with existing group practices, but also his or her tastes, feelings, sensorium, and cognitions. A proper shaping of behavior and experiences results in a clear sense of fit within one's own community. We have referred to this process as a training history, which is embodied, rather than being a mere cognitive appropriation of formal norms, values, or other "social representations." The shaping of physiology and experience can become rigid, we have seen, which again guarantees the automatic and proper enactment of the desired or customary behaviors within the group one belongs to. Sometimes, however, when circumstances have changed or when people have to deal with, or become

part of, other intrinsic social groups, their existing persistent behavioral practices may also lead to a behavioral misfit, or to what we have called “cultural arrests.” It is also in confrontation with people who have a different training history (and therefore different embodied practices, feelings, cognitions, and so forth) that problems in social interaction may arise. What is at stake, then, are practiced behavioral patterns, not mere ideas and ideologies. How can this perspective contribute to an understanding of behavioral changes and problems in our globalizing world?

## **Behavioral Globalization**

Globalization is generally thought of in terms of the worldwide flow of goods and capital. It is sometimes still associated with imperialism, with the flooding of markets by Western consumer goods, and with the exploitation of raw materials and cheap workforces outside the North Atlantic region. It also involves untrammelled financial interference in local policies by banks too big to fail, whose mathematical tools seem to dictate their risk-taking. For many ordinary Western taxpayers around 2013, this type of globalization has acquired a bad reputation as some demonic, reverse wheel of fortune blowing away most of their financial securities.<sup>1</sup>

Our final concern in this book is, however, the observation that the behavioral patterns in the five different domains have begun to resemble each other worldwide. In a globalizing world, people’s lives are becoming more similar, especially in big cities. And it is estimated that by 2040 over 80 percent of the world population will live in cities. In our opinion, the “globalization of behavioral patterns” results from the fact that an increasing number of people worldwide can have (and claim) a better life. That is, ever more people have a secured minimum income, they have access to education and a labor market, they can profit from improved hygiene and health care, they can profit from a better infrastructure for transportation, and have better access to information. In effect, more people are becoming empowered, including women, youngsters, and formerly poor people. We have argued before that whenever people are free to choose, they will most often opt for conditions that serve their sensorium: good and safe food, clean air, a pleasant environment with less noise, less pollution, good opportunities in terms of education and work, etc. Cities can also provide the opposite of pleasant experiences and opportunities, to be sure, but it is nonetheless our hypothesis that people will search for the good life whenever their circumstances allow for it. And because that

good life (or at least a better life) is becoming available to more people around the globe, their existing patterns of behavior are put under pressure. The existing practices and automaticities sometimes become cultural arrests, or the own intrinsic group may in other ways hamper the ambitions of the individual.

Clinging to such patterns often involves not wanting to give up one's own identity, which in turn obstructs adaptation to new circumstances. The changes required to obtain this better life may interfere with the customary practices of the group in which one is safely embedded. Globalization can thus interfere with one's sense of belonging. What is at stake is one's primal sense of self, that is to say the sense of who one thinks one is – or would like to be.

### *A Separation*

As a case in point, let us take a look at the Academy Award-winning movie *A Separation*, by Asghar Farhadi. In the best tradition of English social drama, an Iranian filmmaker confronts the Western world with the life of people in the big city of Teheran, and he shows how this life can go wrong in the domains we have selected.

The female–male relationship is put in jeopardy because of Simin's striving for independence and education. She wants a better future for herself and her daughter, Temeh, and urges her husband, Nader, to move the family abroad. Nader rejects this plan. His father is suffering from Alzheimer's and cannot be left alone. He is thus in a predicament in which the problem of care of the elderly in a city plays an important role. Because of her husband's refusal to move, the wife wants a divorce. When the conservative court obstructs her plan to keep her daughter with her, she decides to go back to her mother's house and live on her own. In this dramatic movie, the chain of events is part of the battle of the sexes, fought with the same zeal as in the West. It is comparable to women's struggle for a better future in a clearly and openly patrimonial, asymmetrical, male-dominated society.

The generational conflict involves the daughter, who moves in with her father and tries to get the best out of her education. We see Temeh trying to develop her skills in a situation in which love and support cannot easily be negotiated because of parental conflict. The social fabric of Iranian society, in which only a minority of men and women agree with the social empowerment of women, is drawn into the plot in a very convincing manner. What keeps the majority faithful to traditional order is surely a behavioral enigma to be resolved by behavioral research.

The themes of class relations and religion are present as well. Because Nader is left alone with his father, he hires a woman from a lower-class background to take care of his father when he is away. This woman, Razieh, is deeply religious and very poor. By caring for the old man she seeks some financial relief to pay her husband's debts. She therefore takes on the job without telling her husband about it. Religious constraints are elaborated in the context of the deep gap between the wealthier progressive family of Nader and the religious upbringing of Razieh as a poor woman with a very conservative religious background. She is strong enough to withstand the constraints placed on her by her husband and his friends. Hers is a tragic struggle for emancipation from male dominance and widely supported demands of female submission, both disguised in religious beliefs. It becomes a classic class conflict when an accident involving Nader's father, and Nader's subsequent anger toward Razieh, are turned into a thrilling whodunit, in which lower-class people are humiliated and constantly made aware of their subordinate position.

In this movie, the five domains are the themes through which the modernization process is played out. The setting is a vibrant metropolis in Iran, a conservative bulwark of religious pressure and patriarchal domination. It becomes clear that a crucial struggle is going on which entangles the parties in each other's lies and obscurantism because it is impossible to manage the conflict in a reasonable way, even though everyone would like that to happen. In our own terminology, it is a movie about the buildup of conflict in a society that wants to get rid of cultural arrests and that is awaiting enlightenment among parties who are unable to give up their persistent behavioral patterns. Nader and his wife are not experiencing so much a clash of traditional and modern cultures, nor are they caught up in a tension between collectivistic and individualistic frames. What is happening is that the wife senses access to experiences of her own, of the possible fulfillment of her own desires, of opportunities to lead a freer and better life. She senses that the existing practices between man and wife as well as the institutions no longer fit her aspirations. If there is a clash, it is a clash of experiences rather than of massive cultures and social structures.

To solve problems, one cannot invoke abstract norms and values to be the guiding principles for Nader, Simin, Temeh, and the other key figures in Farhadi's portrait. It is precisely the existing abstract norms and values that represent the circumstances they want to escape, we could say. As we pointed out in Part One, to bring about effective behavioral change

it is not helpful to take recourse to such abstractions. What is called for is a much more concrete analysis in terms of the problematic character of the patterns of behavior. Thus what is needed is the articulation and training of a new, mutual coordination of actions between men and women, to name but one domain, which thereby will affect existing cultural practices. Such mutual coordination cannot be general, but must always be related to the local arrangements and local circumstances. It should be apparent from all the foregoing chapters that people's full embodiment, convictions, affective repertoire, and feelings of belonging will be at stake. What *can* be of help in this case is a proper analysis in terms of the shaping of experiences that totally involve people, including the way in which they often experience obstruction by dysfunctional communal claims – in other words behavioral science and in particular the perspectives and tools we have outlined above, including a focus on conventions and arrangements in intrinsic social groups, a focus on trained and often automated behaviors that took shape through participation in local practices, a focus on the styled feelings that accompany any behavior and opinion, and so on.

This also means that we should analyze asymmetry between men and women, relations of (most often male) dominance, as well as the styling of affective and sexual behavior, or the lack of it; we should analyze the working and reproduction of status and ethnicity through bodily comportment, habituated practices, and possible misfits between trained behaviors that have become rigid and new living conditions that challenge such rigidity; we should study the ways in which the young can be optimally stimulated to make the best of their abilities, while preserving a safe and loving relationship with them; we should be keenly aware that foreigners may have no difficulty in amassing material goods and little trouble in participating in a society's institutions, yet they may find it very difficult to behave like their hosts when affective arrangements are involved, such as power relations, sexual relations and love, proper ways of paying respect, running a family, and so on. Successful integration is not a one-dimensional concept and one should ask how much success on how many dimensions is actually required to be well integrated. Lastly, we should be sensitive to the fact that faith or belief is crucial for establishing relations between people. Without faith, there can be no law, no economy, no promise, no compromise, and probably no love. Religious faith, as we have observed, is a special case of believing in general. It has many functions, many of them benevolent, but whenever religious faith is deployed for exercising power, scientists should object.

### Behavioral globalization is not necessarily Westernization

One persistent misunderstanding is the general belief that globalization, including behavioral globalization, we might add, automatically implies Westernization. It is a tempting belief because the North Atlantic region has played a major role in conquering the world. From the 1950s until the First Gulf War it was almost as if no other powerful civilization existed, apart from its counterpart the USSR – with the capitalist West as the final victor in the Cold War between these two superpowers. Yet, soon after the First Gulf War of 1990–1991, it became widely understood that outside the civilizing offensive of the Christian world another one and a half billion people had gone through the quite different yet, certainly in terms of its numbers, equally successful civilizing effort of the Islamic world. Economic changes later made people in the West also much more aware that in Japan, China, India, and other Asian nations another four billion people were undergoing other forms of cultural training, due to powerful civilizing agencies partially inspired by the Confucian, Buddhist, and Hindu worldviews. Also in these varieties of civilizing agency, most people had learned not to steal, to postpone immediate gratification, to refrain from committing crimes, to behave properly, to respect other people's integrity, and so on. It seemed to some as if all of a sudden the West found itself amid the rest – not merely as strange distant worlds but as partners in devising means to help organize people's behavior.

In close connection to the foregoing account, until not so long ago many Westerners felt that they lived in the best possible world. Gottfried Leibniz (1710) voiced this belief, but after the Cold War authors like Francis Fukuyama suggested that the Western, capitalist society represented the final destination of history. But now, a generation on, that optimistic image has been shattered in important respects because Islamic countries, China, India, and some South American countries have become world players again and they are often highly critical of the West. Moreover, capitalism pushed the world into an enormous financial crisis in 2008, which struck yet another blow against the optimism of 1989.

Nonetheless, many see the assets of the Western styles of living as unrivaled. What can be easily observed is that many assets that originated in the West, including forms of transportation, information technology, health care, education, and all sorts of gadgets which often help to articulate a person's identity, can now be found worldwide, to people's obvious benefit. This does not mean that these people also fully adopt Western ways of living; often they select some elements to enrich their existing

palette of behaviors. In other cases, the Western example is fiercely contested as a perverse way of living, as Ian Buruma and Avishai Margalit (2004) have argued. Yet in many parts of the world, a modernization (not necessarily a Westernization) is taking place, which implies a huge challenge to current local behavioral patterns. Emancipatory movements of women and cultural minorities, following the examples set in the twentieth-century West, are voices that demand participation in a better life as soon as circumstances allow for it. They question the existing behavioral patterns of male or white dominance. Another example involves the political collapse of the former USSR, which marked the end of the Cold War, as we will argue in more detail below. Similar voices for participation could also be witnessed in the people's revolutions in the Middle East since 2010. But next to such broader, political demands for change, existing behavioral patterns are as much under pressure in people's private households worldwide, wherever people's lives begin to resemble the lives of people in the West.

By no means do we intend to say that the West is therefore the enlightening example for the rest, nor do we mean that Western behavioral patterns are better than those of others. Downsides to the Western ways of living are clearly visible: pollution, egocentrism, materialism, sometimes a striking lack of behavioral styling and ritualization, particularly in the sexual domain, and so on. Opponents of the Western way of living, for instance in the Middle East, China, and Japan, as Buruma and Margalit argue, have been feeding on the general disgust, voiced also in the West itself, of the anonymous, noisy, and seductive city environment. Yet again, despite the sentiments of Occidentalism, it is striking to what extent the Western lifestyle is imitated in both its beauty and ugliness by the masses. And it seems to attract men and women alike, everywhere.

We do not want to imply that poverty, backwardness, and misery have almost disappeared from the face of the earth either, for they have not. It is a truism, however, that in the Western world poverty has become a minority problem while in the new big world economies of China, India, and Brazil the number of people able to improve their circumstances has been growing rapidly. In its core, this could contain a positive message for other parts of the world as well. To many, Western lifestyles serve as appealing examples of how to live one's life. And certainly many people in the West feel, like Leibniz, that they indeed live in the best of all possible worlds when compared to other regions on our globe.

Following Boas (see Part One), we first call upon a self-investigation of such feelings of superiority. This begins with the realization that many of the conditions that have favored the West have also been operative among



most of the rest of the world. How much of their heritage is the result of a historical amalgam has been explained by Jared Diamond.

## Ecological Conditions for Civilization

In 1997 Jared Diamond's book *Guns, Germs and Steel: The Fates of Human Societies* appeared. In this book, which we also mentioned in the previous chapter, the author tried to answer the question why the West got ahead of the rest, even though on the Eurasian landmass it had been in the company of other great civilizations like China, India, and the Arab world. The book was written in opposition to those who hold good genes responsible for the Western global success. Genes are always involved, as we have argued throughout this book, yet never to the extent that an entire civilization can be created from biological assets like good genes. Whatever civilization is, it is the result of human accomplishments. Not of genes or brains as such, but of the concerted activities of embodied individuals whose experiences and practices have become tuned toward each other through cooperative tasks in tangible, organized, and stimulating environments. In the past 13,000 years, after living in small nomadic bands was given up in favor of a sedentary existence, Eurasia profited the most from the ecological conditions, Diamond shows. We will present a very brief summary of his central maxims.

### The continent's position on mild latitudes

Diamond has not been the only one to emphasize ecological conditions. He is in the company of, among others, Fernand Braudel (1963), William McNeill (1963), David Landes (1998), and Ian Morris (2010). However, Diamond was the first to emphasize what the West shares with the Rest so that we can better understand why a longstanding exchange, implying at times fierce competition and rivalry, came into existence. He argues that China, India, and the Middle East could also take advantage of what the Eurasian landmass had to offer. If an observer in around 1500 had to gamble on which civilization would become a hegemonic power, there were quite a few candidates.

The predecessors of today's civilization in Eurasia – including the Sumerians, the Babylonians, the ancient Egyptians, and the ancient Greeks – profited from the fertile crescent that covers the area in an arc from present-day Egypt to Iran. About 10,000 years ago, agriculture developed in Sumeria, as well as in five other places on the globe, including today's

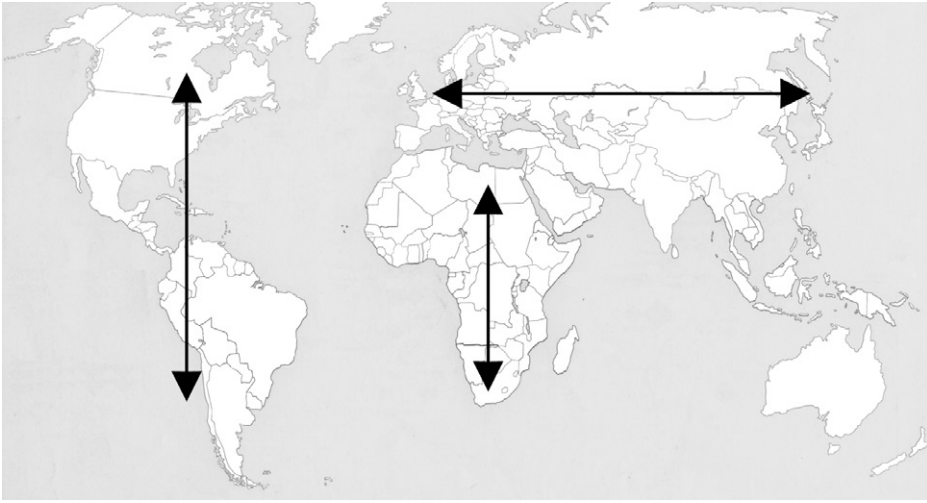


Figure 9.1 World axes.

Ethiopia, China, Northeast America, Middle America, and across the Andes. All these areas took advantage of landmasses on moderate latitudes. Yet, if we compare the geography of these latter areas with Eurasia's position on the globe, we will find that Eurasia is the only vast area that is situated horizontally on the mild latitudes of the planet. As a result, Diamond argues, crops and animals could easily spread all the way from East to West without too many dangers and obstacles. Figure 9.1 illustrates this.

From the shores of East Asia to where Europe reaches out into the waters of the North Atlantic Ocean and the Mediterranean Sea, one continuous habitable stretch of land runs through valleys and between mountain ranges. From the dawn of the great ancient civilizations, it has been the setting for an interlocking network of passable routes that made transportation and communication possible over large stretches of land.

Moreover, the fact that all other continents have a vertical axis on the globe implies that the spreading of crops and animals is frustrated by different climate zones. Wild horses, for example, do not survive in tropical regions because of the tsetse fly. Most of Africa, therefore, never had domesticated horses that could be used for transport, farming, or warfare. The zebra could not be domesticated because it was simply too wild an animal. Also, having control over the power of the larger animals of Africa certainly would have meant much more resistance against intruders, but also involved too much human effort to get them to work on the

land. Imagine that the Bantu had domesticated the rhinoceros . . . In addition, the moderate latitude of the Eurasian continent had favorable consequences for growing seeds, fruits, and nuts. The spreading of wild varieties and the subsequent improvement of naturally occurring specimens created a surplus of food in the moderate areas. According to Diamond, the domestication and consumption of plants and animals forms one of the most important preconditions for civilization.

And there was still another advantage for Eurasia. Living with animals for a very long time resulted in immunity against deadly diseases that could spread from animal to humans, like smallpox, measles, influenza, and typhus. Diamond notes the enormous impact of microbes against which the inhabitants of the New World had no defense. Recent DNA research confirms a demographic collapse in the Americas about five centuries ago (see O'Fallon and Fehren-Schmitz 2011). The malaria bug, bacterias, and viruses introduced into the Americas by the ships that followed in the wake of Columbus's first voyage helped to ruin the great civilizations of the pre-Columbian era.

The surplus of food that resulted in the early Eurasian civilizations, from the Europeans to the Chinese, could be exchanged and traded, which led to the establishment of ruling classes to protect stock and to safeguard trade in a hostile environment. It became possible for certain factions of these ruling classes to specialize in cognitive tasks that were indispensable for taxation, administration, and differentiation. Especially after the invention and spread of writing, a further division of labor occurred, which included administrators, but also thinkers, poets, and priests. The latter made themselves indispensable as the only persons who knew how to satisfy the gods.

## **A Further Head Start for Europe in Particular**

Although a division of labor occurred as much in Europe as it did in China or the Middle East, the geography and geology of Europe made it different from the other two. Europe quickly became a dense network of roads and waterways that connected a patchwork of local administrative centers, many of which developed into centers of wider power. That gave a boost to both trade and warfare, which in turn catalyzed technical and financial innovations. Moreover, a compact network of states, or princely regions, each with their own hinterland, turned out to be much more favorable for the rooting of civilization than the vast stretches of land under the central control of the imperial dynasties of China or the Middle East.

## Diversity

The diversified state formation process is also described by Francis Fukuyama (2011). He presents interesting details of the tripartite development of (1) the state, including the acquisition of the monopoly on violence, (2) the Rule of Law, comprising the independent execution of justice and fairness, and (3) an accountable government, which takes responsibility and provides justification for the actions of its executive rulers. To cut his argument short: Important parts of China had a strong, centralized, and administratively unified state as early as 206 BC. It was achieved through military organization, taxation, bureaucracy, and Confucian training. But unlike the way in which Europe developed into a multipolar assembly of states, with only a few serious attempts to unite the whole, China was an absolutist state from the third century BC onward. It had no accountable and juridical Rule of Law that could restrict the emperor and the imperial court in the same way as the court restricted its ordinary citizens. Throughout China's history, justice remained dependent on the emperor's reasonableness and fairness, corroborated by his allies. So although there was some sort of legal structure for the subjects, it was coextensive with the codification of the emperor's commands. To quote Fukuyama: "In the West, in India, and in the Muslim world there was a body of preexisting law [. . .] that was prior to and independent of the state. This law was seen as being older, higher, and more legitimate than the current ruler and therefore binding on him. [. . .] Rule of Law in this sense never existed in China" (2011: 121).

However, the position of the state in the Ottoman Empire was not very different from China in terms of state strength and absolutism, Fukuyama argues. The Muslim state had also taken the route of administrative centralization, as Machiavelli (1532) noticed. The core difference with China was the prominent place of Rule of Law, sanctioned by Islamic religion. Islamic law, to which also the sultan was subjected, implied accountability, though to a rather limited degree, as Hans Küng (2004) noted. A caste of priests articulated and safeguarded the religious laws. In this closed circle of scholars an inflexible juridical system held the sultan accountable. It prevented arbitrariness, but it was at the same time resistant to change and could not respond quickly enough to administrative challenges. It subjected philosophy and science to theological skirmishes, Küng also notes (pp. 482–483). The Ottoman administration had to tolerate a law-making religious establishment that was independent of the state. Moreover, this body of high priests had no other authority above them than the Supreme Being that they legitimized themselves.

By contrast, under the hegemonic reign of the “Europe of the Regions,” as the assembly of states that finally emerged after 1500 could be called, legal scholars of the various ascending nations devised a body of laws that resulted in the widely adopted separation of political powers into executive, legislative, and judicial and in the clear separation of worldly and religious powers. These principles safeguarded the state against religious domination. In Europe no theocracy emerged. Libertarian forces in the community generally remained too strong to be subjected to religious authority. Attempts in some countries to silence these libertarian voices did not succeed, as Benjamin Kaplan (1995) has demonstrated for the Netherlands.

### Division by faith

Another point of distinction that determined Europe’s fate from the sixteenth century onward was its division by faith. Unlike China, the Ottoman Empire, and other powerful rivals, Europe was no longer bound by a central ideology. Eventually, this in fact allowed for the replacement of religion by a secular order.<sup>2</sup> Benjamin Kaplan (2007) argues that the end of the Catholic monopoly on salvation coincided in Europe with the invention of printing, which propelled the rapid distribution of books throughout the continent. Soon after Martin Luther nailed his 95 theses on indulgences to the church door of Wittenberg Castle in 1517, all kinds of repressed and neglected subgroups in society followed the simple and imaginative devotion of the Augustinian monk. His critical stance mocked the elaborate constructions that popes, bishops, and pastors demanded from their flock. His popular faith provided an alternative to the high church authoritarian beliefs of the Catholic rulers. The Protestant movement must have struck a chord, otherwise the reason for its rapid dissemination in about 50 years, as Kaplan has documented, remains a mystery. From now on, the Europe of the regions that had been ruled in terms of religion by one single churchly authority, sometimes in conflict with the state, became divided by strong faiths that despite all the original violence of the break eventually created checks and balances of a competing variety that could be found nowhere else.

### Fighting patrimonialism

In addition, and as argued in Chapter 4, since 1200 European citizens had been less subjected to patrimonial order than people in Eastern empires. Europe adopted its distinct marriage model which created much more behavioral freedom for small nuclear families in the city, particularly

on the economic plane. Fukuyama (2011: 233) notices that: “The Christian doctrine of universal equality of all human beings under God made it much easier to justify equality of rights for women as property owners.” We would add that the creation of the loving bond of Christian *Agape* (see Chapter 4) has been the core love practice of Westerners, inspired foremost by religion and eventually reshaped by its courtly rival.

In sum, love as the prime mover of intimate bonds between people, and the breakdown of one single religious authority into a multitude of faiths to anchor and calibrate one’s moral compass, contributed to a high level of individuality. That is to say, it created an alternative for the individual to being subjected to the needs of the community. Rather, the group could be seen as supporting, stimulating, and sustaining the individual. The consequences of this form of individualism can hardly be overestimated. Whereas in other empires the individual remained under the spell of the clan, family, or kin group, and paternal authority remained unchallenged, in the Europe of the regions a loving bond was practiced in which at least some room was left for privacy and solitude. Bonds could be adopted freely. That practice became much more prevalent the moment people’s material circumstances improved and allowed for alliances that served the interests of the individual or couple. Personal worth became something bestowed on the individual as a result of his or her individual accomplishments, within the freely chosen circles of relatives and friends, and was freed from strict paternal authority. In the Ottoman, Chinese, and Indian Empires patrimonial order remained largely unchallenged. The group stayed in power as the source of identity and worth. Of course, the freely chosen group could disintegrate into varieties of selfish individualism, but usually the nuclear family or the wider circle of friends and relatives helped to promote individual growth.

## **Archaic and Early Modern Globalization**

Chris Bayly (2004) emphasizes the behavioral changes that accompanied modernity. Interestingly, he does not give priority to the economic forces of the Industrial Revolution but to those of the so-called “industrious revolutions” that started after the first improvements in people’s material circumstances occurred due to trade and agricultural innovations, by the end of the seventeenth century. Industrious revolutions involved small household and family businesses that existed in a variety of forms worldwide. Their focus might be agriculture, trade, small factories, local banks, or shipyards, to name but a few examples. In some cases, the size of the enterprises quickly increased, as was the case in the Dutch East India

Company. The small-scale industrious revolution had already fostered economic growth in the world's cities and paved the way for booming worldwide trade and commerce before the greater "Industrial Revolution" was set in motion. In what Bayly calls the "archaic globalization" period, the early traders and explorers of European states went all over the world and laid the foundation for an extensive network of exchange routes.

In Europe there was no central court and therefore no core administrative unity, as we have seen. The existing courts were interconnected and they served as places of focal attention for scholars and diplomats in continuous exchange and rivalry with each other. It is also in this context that encounters with other civilizations took place. Bayly shows that the European courtly rulers who met with the Ottoman or Chinese nobles found some interesting commonalities with these people. In each region a power elite lived in palaces where courtiers bathed in luxury. All over the world, people at royal and imperial courts were very sensitive to each other's strong points: bodily care, the promotion of health, literacy, and all other means for boosting one's presence and status. Using commodities such as beautiful horses, jewelry, fine fabrics, and fine foods added to the comfort and to the display of good living. The recognition of these distinguished lifestyles was often the first source of respect between foreigners. It created the bonds of mutual admiration as well as a willingness to exchange gifts and to make deals, thereby also paving the way for traders and for a wider confrontation with alternative and often appealing lifestyles.

Thus, in Asia and the Middle East, Westerners encountered sophisticated practices in body care, nutrition, and health care. They were also confronted with sexual practices unheard of in the West. Without a doubt, the local expertise of the foreign trade partners in all these areas inspired the intellectuals and artists of the Western world. Products, but to an important degree also the accompanying lifestyles and experiences, were imported into the improved and relatively prosperous household economies of Europe. Luxurious commodities facilitated the creation of new ways of living for a wider audience. New foods and drinks changed people's routines, but the new behavioral styles also included new reactions to the environment, to the dirt on the streets, to noise, and to bad smells. It all became integrated into new behavioral patterns that constituted the bourgeois sensitivities and the education of the senses which once more served as a demarcation; namely to set the upper echelons of society apart from the lower. It stimulated further supply and demand and in consequence the market. Tea, coffee, sugar, spices, fashion, vases, feathers,



furniture, and kitchen utensils became so fashionable that they required a completely new distribution system: warehouses. The growth of trade and distribution made such products available to even more people, helping to create a highly attractive way of living in which many profited from the intensified global trade.

Richard Sennett (1977) demonstrates how the “self” or “personality” was produced in this very same period and increasingly became the reference point for participation in public life. Private feelings became important in self-presentation, thereby eroding conventionalized public standards of conduct, primarily because people in the anonymous cities were in need of new behavioral forms. Modern citizens became preoccupied with making visible to a wider audience to what social class they belonged, since that was not always conventionally evident any more, thus producing more refined social subdivisions that overtook the traditional classification of people into aristocracy, guild members, traders, commoners, and outlaws. Because of the emergence of bourgeois newcomers, the aristocracy lost influence even though it remained the inspiration and example for the *nouveau riche*. The opposition between urban and rural life became one of the first schisms in which modernity manifested itself. No wonder, then, that the city also elicited negative sentiments. It was not only the locus of prosperity and progression but also of doom, destruction, loneliness, despair, insensitivity, ennui, and lasciviousness.

Such changes in consumer behavior could be found everywhere. While in Europe during the nineteenth century the urban culture emerged “as a more uniform and distinct pattern of living” as Bayly has phrased it (2004: 194), in Asia common people from the lower and middling classes enriched their lives with food, household goods, furniture, kitchen- and tableware from the fashionable European circles (see Figure 9.2). In the gradually modernizing cities of Europe and the Americas, of Asia and the Middle East, systems of rule, administration, and legitimation started to resemble each other. In that respect the regions of the world learned from each other.

### Religious convergence

The religions of the world also started to resemble each other, Bayly argues. Instead of erosion and demystification as the consequences of a more secular scientific worldview, religions all over the world became more doctrinally and ecclesiastically organized. In the nineteenth century more and more authoritative religious structures were devised in the Catholic Church, in the Protestant churches such as the Anglican



**Figure 9.2** Portrait of Jean-Baptiste Belley by Anne-Louis Girodet, 1797. Versailles, Musée National du Château de Versailles et du Trianon. © 2013 White Images / Scala, Florence. In Europe during the nineteenth century the urban culture emerged “as a more uniform and distinct pattern of living” (Bayly 2004: 194).

Church and the Baptists in the United States, in Buddhism, and in Hinduism. Doctrinaire refinement and articulation led to some sort of standardization of observance, by adopting orthodoxy and orthopraxis ordained by authoritative structures which emerged globally in comparable forms. Docility among religious followers became a worldwide phenomenon. Even Confucianism and Buddhism, as examples of a god-free orthopraxis, became “doctrinized” under the pressure of monks. These worldviews without a deity lost their diversity and became much more

homogeneous and amenable to state-induced behavioral shaping. Bayly contends that this phenomenon of converging public religious organization probably had much more impact than religion as a private affair. Seen worldwide, religion remained firmly in place despite its debunking in some enlightened circles of Europe.

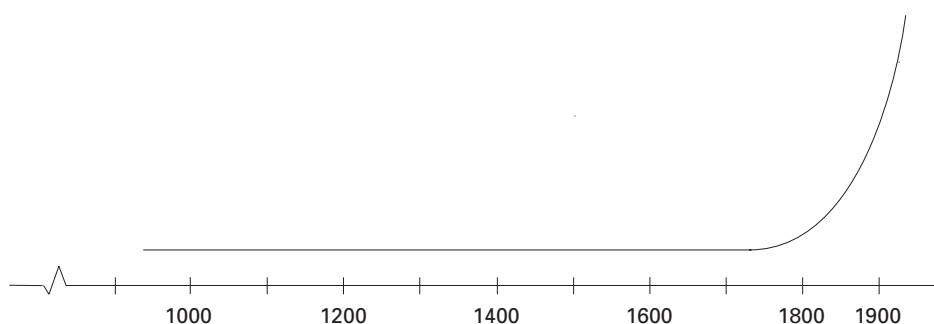
Bayly relates how by the 1890s numerous societies were started in China for the propagation of Confucianism. What was intended to teach moral elevation and a virtuous life became entrenched in institutionalized forms that made people malleable and obedient, to such an extent that authoritarianism was considered to be a natural policy. Institutionalized Confucianism proved a very efficient means for the Chinese aristocracy to ward off foreign influences and to keep their own citizens in line.

Paradoxically, we might say, the early Christian missionaries of either Catholic or Protestant origin in fact intensified the identity formation of what were, in their eyes, superstitious believers. The way the existing beliefs were often ridiculed worked counterproductively for change. Along the lines that particularly the Catholic Church had deployed in the regions it covered, identities became managed in existing religions as well: priestly leaders, intensive proselytizing, erecting places of worship, establishing hierarchy, and other means to control people's behaviors.

### Improved living conditions

While around 1800 it was still unclear what regions in the world would become dominant, it became clear quite soon afterwards that the West could profit most from (at least) a threefold boost in welfare and well-being. Gregory Clark (2007) shows how the world had been locked in a "Malthusian trap" until the nineteenth century. A Malthusian trap is a situation in which prosperity remains limited because the food supply cannot keep up with population growth. Population growth led to starvation time and again. This trap was eventually destroyed by what the nineteenth-century economist Alfred Marshall observed for the first time: a better organization of the workforce and a better mobilization of resources contributed from 1800 onward to productivity to an unprecedented degree, so that food supply could finally keep pace with population growth.

Ian Morris (2010), who invented an indicator of social development comprising energy capture, organization/urbanization, war-making, and information technology, produced a similar graph. His curve also shows that on a world scale the economic situation improved drastically for the West and East after 1800. A third and again very similar curve can be found in Veenhoven (2010), who shows how the quality of life has



**Figure 9.3** The prosperity curve of the modern era worldwide. This is a composite of the figures in Clark (2007, p. 2), Morris (2010, p. 161) and Veenhoven (2010, p. 20).

improved worldwide since 1800, whereas it had been at a minimum for millennia. Veenhoven constructed an indicator of happiness out of anthropological material related to longevity and well-being, which could be used for historical comparison (Figure 9.3). Much can be said of course about the distribution of people's improvements of life. For instance, in the North Atlantic region the problem of poverty disappeared for the majority of people, by the end of the twentieth century, though it is still a problem for a minority. Currently, in the Third World things are drastically different, regrettably. However, the development that Veenhoven sketches does contain an optimistic message: It is possible for wealth and well-being to spread.

It is generally assumed that the West profited the most from this general improvement in living conditions. The reasons are not all that clear. It is undisputed that the deployment of practical science (see also below) stimulated trade and slowly but surely improved people's living conditions. But other factors are disputed, such as the European state constructions, rivalry between nations, religious division, and widely distributed centers of power whose strength fluctuated with their *imperial overstretch* (excessive economic spending on warfare that finally destroys a nation's resilience), as Paul Kennedy (1987) has argued. In the end, European nations divided the world among themselves, a situation that lasted until the second half of the twentieth century.

Due to these disputed developments and their advantages, which we can only outline briefly, the West became the dominant world civilization after 1800. Europe became the center of power when the industrious revolutions were followed by the Industrial Revolution. This started with the patenting of James Watt's steam engine around 1784 and was followed

by the invention of the weaving machines for which Edmund Cartwright took out patents in 1785 and 1789. The developments we have described so far intensified in the nineteenth century. It was the age of imperialism and of the dominant Western civilizing offensive, and ended with World War I.

To be sure, the ascent of this Western offensive was far from subtle. As we have seen in Part One, it was launched in the wake of attempts to convert the world to Christianity. Later on the idea of culture provided a secular legitimation for forcing onto others the blessings of Western civilization. And let there be no mistake: Europe's hegemonic position was predominantly acquired with military power, which manifested itself throughout the nineteenth century, along with an air of superiority and disdain for other ways of living. The Europeans did not end the existing subordination of indigenous people, the lack of democracy, and bad labor conditions, but on the contrary took advantage of the already established dependencies in foreign countries. Arno Mayer (1981) concludes that by 1914 modernization had not brought what could have been expected from it, not for the Western people and certainly not for the rest.

The world of 1914 was worse off than the world of 1789, Mayer contends. Science and technology had been put at the service of establishing hegemonic power and were not presented purposefully for the betterment of everybody's living conditions. That only happened after the world had gone through a period of atrocious violence on a global scale. The new democratic lifestyle of the modernizers in charge did much for the upper strata of society. There, more controllable conditions were created but these improvements did not immediately trickle down to the masses. It also became clear that the alleged blessings of the industrial complex were initially mixed with mainly military interests, not only in the sense that industrial advancement made military power possible, but also in the sense that this military power in fact spawned the invention of new weaponry, thereby stimulating scientific and technological innovation.

In sum, Europe gradually reached a dominant global position as a result of – among other factors – archaic globalization of trade, missionary work, an advantageous politico-technical infrastructure, and destructively superior military power. Yet, there was also something appealing in the Western way of living. The European lifestyle entailed experiences that many others in the world found attractive as well. Niall Ferguson (2006) sketches the institutional framework within which these experiences could flourish.

## **Appealing Applications in the Western Civilizing Offensive After 1800**

Ferguson notes the paradox that between 1880 and 1999 the life of the European citizens, measured by all kinds of indicators, improved: longevity, better health, more leisure, a much more comfortable life in the cities, and so on. Yet, violence had never been as pervasive. Almost 200 million people died from organized violence. The paradox is not explained very well by looking only at the core reasons behind these deaths, such as economic depression, class conflict, ethnic tension, ideology, religion, nationalism, and imperial usurpation. Ferguson selects ethnic conflict and racism, economic instability and volatility, and empires in turmoil and decay as the most important reasons. He goes beyond conventional military analyses in that not only violence between countries but also within countries is accounted for. However, he does not explain why prosperity paralleled the violence. To Ferguson's analyses we might add a factor that greatly contributed to the violence from the late nineteenth century onward, namely the uneven distribution of wealth and the clear prospect for a better life that became increasingly visible through the success of trade. Many people realized that they had no access to the pleasures of this more comfortable lifestyle. It took an extremely violent period to calibrate the senses of not just politicians, but the people at large, to understand that redistribution is only possible if responsible leaders and their followers take pains to start from the assets that are already there to be exploited, and not destroyed.

Ferguson (2011) presents a summary of the assets that came out of the Western civilizing offensive, despite its brutal enforcement mixed with overpowering military display. These assets attracted people all over the world to the Western civilizing offensive. Ferguson's book is a defense of the West, and as such rather Eurocentric, but it makes some strong points that directly involve positive appeal. Ferguson uses the jargon of smart phones and tablets, when he calls the Western assets "apps" – applications that are ready to be downloaded anywhere else, so to speak. Everyone can use them if the proper conditions are met. Ferguson emphasizes that for these applications to become behaviorally active, they need to be firmly anchored locally in strong institutions, a point also emphasized by Acemoglu and Robinson (2012), who argue that inclusive institutions are the main source of prosperity.

According to Ferguson, the Western apps have been very powerful to give the West its edge. As like many historians before him, he makes



comparisons between the West, China, and the Ottoman Empire. In his opinion, these latter empires lost the hegemonic battle because they were not strong enough to provide workable applications that beat the European ones. For Ferguson, the core apps of the Western civilizing offensive are the following.

- 1 *Competition.* What can readily be applied elsewhere in order to achieve historically proven economic and political success is the Westerners' utter abhorrence of centralization and a closed society. Open competitive behavior is the preeminent vehicle of change.
- 2 *Property and property rights, protected by readily enforced Rule of Law.* Every society has to allow for basic rights of possession that are protected by a well-organized legal system. If these rights are left at the mercy of rulers, as was for example the case in China, as we have seen, however benevolent, it is an insufficient guarantee. Guarantee comes from strong protection of rights of possession by enforceable and fair laws.
- 3 *Consumption.* After the world had learned the harsh lessons of World Wars I and II, namely that participation of all without exception in prosperity is the only bulwark against systematic state-orchestrated violence, it first dawned on economic science that the poor producers in Europe's big cities could become consumers as well. The behavioral practices of the elite segments of nations, who in the early twentieth century had privileged only themselves, started to disseminate into the lower segments of society. When it was discovered that exclusion of people on the basis of their race, class, sex, age, and religion is detrimental to advancement and prosperity, the spread of material pleasures went on relentlessly. As Ferguson puts it: "By 1945 it was time for the West to lay down its arms and pick up its shopping bags – to take off its uniform and put on its blue jeans" (2011: 199).
- 4 *Work ethic.* This is the toughest app to be implemented elsewhere, since it quickly encounters persistent local practices that run against efficiency in labor-related productivity. Ferguson relates work ethic to the role that God had played in the rise of the West. Ferguson discusses extensively Max Weber's discovery during his stay in the United States that religious practice and productivity of labor are intimately connected. Weber famously related his observed American "work ethic" to Protestant forms of Christianity. The exact historical rooting of such an interpretation may be debatable, but Ferguson remarks – rightly, we think – that this connection boils down to religion's role in education.<sup>3</sup> Almost everywhere, the Church brings out the best in



humans by organizing proper motivation, promoting discipline, and teaching people to delay gratification. Ferguson presents convincing data about the economic benefits of introducing Christianity in China, for example.

- 5 *Science*. Ferguson mainly presents this app in the context of military power and dominance: science stimulated military labor productivity. The West became very productive and strong in this sense.
- 6 *Medicine*. Medicine was partially born out of necessity, in order to make colonial rule possible. Tropical diseases posed a threat to colonialism. It was therefore mandatory to closely study diseases, which put medicine on the political agenda, and not just in the focus of scientists alone. Its effects were impressive: people's global average life expectancy increased from 28.5 years in 1800 to 66.6 years in 2001. Colonial imperialism thus had as a benign side effect a clear victory over many diseases. But Ferguson also reports an unwelcome side-effect. Thorough medical investigation of colonial native populations created an enormous backlash because of the way in which these people were approached and classified. Nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century medicine was as such also a source of the scientifically backed racism that we encountered in Part One.

Ferguson's analyses can be seen as an extension of Bayly's global perspective. The Western civilizing offensive and its civilizing of labor elicited changes worldwide. Together with Bayly's notion of archaic globalization, Ferguson's apps can be used to understand the strength of the West and its appeal at the level of basic institutional provisions. Ferguson's book abounds with examples of how local institutions in "the Rest" underwent changes when confronted with Western solutions. China's workforce became much more focused on zealous work encouraged by Christianity, and many jurisdictions the world over adopted or adapted Napoleonic law.

Ferguson's observations clarify to an important extent the global "success" of the West. His analysis is also in line with Fukuyama's argument that we presented earlier. Yet their observations concentrate on institutions and politico-economic parameters. What the authors seem to overlook is that there were appealing elements in the European *experience*, so to speak. Institutions contribute to the arrangements within which people operate experientially, as we have argued throughout this book. But institutions themselves cannot exert a real force over people, nor can they shape people's experiences. Rather, such shaping takes place between people as a result of the mutual tuning of behavior – and hence-

forth experiences and feelings – such that people come to feel obliged to pay their taxes, to apply for jobs, to believe in the authority of the law, the value of money, the authenticity of others, and so on. Therefore, a behavioral perspective on globalization should address the shaping of experiences that accompanied Ferguson's and Fukuyama's institutional apps, and it is our hypothesis that this shaping of experiences was a prerequisite for the successful dissemination of those institutional apps. We therefore argue that there was something appealing in the experiential repertoire of the Europeans.

## **The Appeal of the Western Way of Life**

As we argued earlier, Christopher Herbert (1991) showed that the modern theories of culture developed by Sigmund Freud and Émile Durkheim retained certain salutary or soteriological features. Western culture has often been recommended as a salutary doctrine. The idea of original sin was replaced by the idea of an impudent human nature that needed to be polished and reshaped through the civilizing influence of culture. Only in this way could the human being be redeemed from his brute atavistic and animalistic nature. This way of thinking affected the way in which the popular cultures of the lower classes in the cities and of farmers in the countryside were dealt with. It was believed that schooling, disciplining, and drilling people into good habits could lead to a reasonable level of civilization. Maurice Quinlan (1941) wonderfully describes how early it all started.

Yet the manner in which modernity influenced the lives of millions did not depend on salvation disguised in the political and scientific faith in progress. Probably much more influential were the ways in which new forms of living continued to get a hold on people's experiences, under the influence of modern technical and economic means. This process increased in the twentieth century. Certainly after World War II one can really speak of a *secular* civilizing offensive. A telling example of this difference between proselytizing political pep talk and what really accounts for change is the movie *Novecento* by Bernardo Bertolucci. It is a movie from 1976, in the heyday of leftist ideological resistance against capitalism. It is about the life of two friends who shared their youth but then went their own way. One is the son of a poor farmer; the other is the son of the landlord for whom this poor farmer works. The interests of both boys are completely opposite and yet they are united in friendship. Bertolucci portrays the impoverished circumstances

under which the farmers at that time had to live and work. By showing the experiences of the poor boy, one gets a glimpse of the misery of poor workers. The arrogance of the prosperous upper class, which is the background of the other boy, is contrasted with the deprivation of the poorer youngster. One can sense the difficulties that the boys are facing. It is difficult not to feel compassion for their struggle for existence, which Bertolucci wants to convey.

More than 35 years later the movie comes across as a melodrama to the contemporary viewer. One notices that the movie plays with leftist sentiments that in no way alleviated the conditions of the poor. Instead, it was the introduction of the combine harvester working on a steam engine that was the decisive factor. Its introduction led to the downfall of the poor peasants since it made manual seasonal labor unnecessary. It destroyed the communal bonds between the workers. In vain did they march behind the red flag. In the movie, this technical innovation only causes grave suffering and pain among the villagers. Yet the viewer may also become convinced that these machines were much more important in alleviating the human condition than was the whole array of ideological skirmishes. Of course, we do not want to diminish the importance of the workers' social movements throughout the Western world. Their struggles surely contributed to the awareness that something had to be changed in the distribution of wealth and power. The most decisive impetus for that change came from technical and infrastructural provisions, however. Experiencing Bertolucci's movie after so many years illustrates cogently that modernity acquired its civilizing impact through research and technological advancement. In that sense, both church doctrine and political ideology were outclassed by what became viable in economic and technological terms.

The spreading throughout the entire world of economic and technical innovations slowly but inadvertently has created the contours of a world that never existed before. We argued in the original Dutch edition of our book in 2007 that there are three behavioral developments that are tied to such advancement, not unlike Ferguson's "apps." These behavioral patterns first appeared in the North Atlantic region and will probably have worldwide appeal and impact. What is central to them is that group practices are to a large extent facilitating for the individual rather than limiting or suppressing. This requires an optimum, of course, such that individuals are motivated and equipped to make their own choices and to forge their own experiences, while their incorporation into the group is secured so as to prevent isolation, loneliness, or selfish individualism. The three developments are: modernization without conversion, inclusion of previously excluded groups, and the chance to shape one's own experiences.

## Modernization without conversion

The Western modernization projects developed into a secularized variety of the earlier civilizing offensive that was closely intertwined with conversion to Christianity. Nonetheless, in this propagation of Western culture, soteriological features were retained that created the false image of modernization as Westernization. By shaking off its initially religiously inspired hegemonic pretense, modernity can be prevented from becoming a detrimental force. We need to develop a modernization that does not require conversion of any sort.

The secularized civilizing offensive of the West is not local or provincial anymore; it has become a global phenomenon. And, as Bayly has argued, the civilizing offensive of the West has never been an exclusively Western affair. During archaic globalization, for instance, goods, knowledge, and experiences came from all over the world and they went all over the world. It is from this amalgam that the West profited a lot, but what it brought to other regions was just as much an amalgam. This by no means implies that the West's civilizing offensive has always had a positive impact. On the contrary, it often had a devastating influence all over the world. But once attention is paid to the actual experiences of people, it cannot go unnoticed that people everywhere claim for themselves the fruits of modernity, including those groups that were previously excluded (see next section). As soon as material pleasures become available, people give priority to what is really felt, that is, to what they register with their *sensorium*.

In Part One, we reserved this term for the totality of people's senses, in order to prevent their experience from being analyzed solely in mentalist terms. One's sensorium is the node where stimuli and impressions come together, predominantly because of the way in which people have become incorporated in their group. In addition, without the biological basis of body 1 and without its particular capacities to register what impinges upon it, humans cannot feel anything. But as we have seen in Chapter 3, those feelings are inevitably communally calibrated and trained. This group-typical sensitization reveals the workings of the expressive body 2. It is also precisely in such training histories that the sensorium can be put under high pressure. For instance, people can try to live under difficult circumstances that they cannot change themselves. Sometimes, some feelings can be overruled by others or they can temporarily be banned from experience. It explains why some mothers who live in extremely difficult circumstances from which they cannot escape, develop indifference towards their newborn babies. The chances that the mother will lose her child are so high that the normal development of motherly love and care

is postponed. Some people succeed in living under great threats, and biting the bullet can fight off anxiety, in the same way that pain can be endured for some time. Yet, such “survival modes” are far from agreeable and one cannot put too much pressure on the sensorium for too long: Wine that is too sour will be spat out; too much suffering will be countered. As soon as circumstances change for the better, the sensorium gives way to the experiences that have been banned and excluded temporarily.

When politicians or others who determine people’s fate frustrate the sensorium by creating unbearable circumstances, people may find a way to block the experience that something is really wrong. Such blocking can happen under great pressure and force. Yet, as soon as the sensorium is free again, it will register what is really important: clean air, less noise, no infringements on one’s bodily integrity, nuisance, and other discomforts. The appeal of these experiences ordained by the senses is probably universal, even though local and group-typical practices will further shape and refine people’s sensibilities of body 2. Everywhere people want what is agreeable and what feels good; that is, they like what we call “modern conveniences.” The point is that the Western lifestyle has created such conveniences and they have become known across the world. Like we said before, this not only includes cars and vacuum cleaners, but also good medical care, good education, personal rights, transportation, and access to information. Better circumstances, including material pleasures and all sorts of security, can bring the experience of freedom and open up possibilities which are intrinsically appealing to everyone. This becomes all the more the case when the barriers of sex and gender, age, status, ethnicity, or religion diminish or perhaps are even torn down. In this sense, the effects of globalization should also be understood as psychological phenomena. Its appeal does not simply depend on the impressive reputation of the Enlightenment or some sort of spiritual renewal, but primarily on the fact that people embrace whatever really connects to their sensorium. Such advancements need no special conversion of any sort, but instead require a proper attunement in the group such that the experience of the good life can be advanced and optimized for every individual.

### Inclusion of previously excluded groups

One of the West’s most conspicuous features is that it is also addressed at groups that remained marginalized in the previous stages of societal development. For example, women are much more involved in the shaping of modern life than ever before. This can create space for another, and

often much more refined, attunement of experiences that expresses what women generally consider to be important and to which they tend to pay much more attention than men.

The body as a universalizing instrument again lies at the basis of the workings of the sensorium. But since it is equipped biologically in a gender-specific way *and* on the basis of group sensitivities, the body operates differently for males and females. Once the female sensorium has the possibility to develop itself, women will demand for themselves the same opportunities to contribute to the shaping and styling of everyday life as have men. One interesting point about technology and commerce is precisely that it also leaves room for female experience. Modern technology does not require masculine brute force. Since they often have been on the margins of society, women are often much more inventive; and since they are used to sacrificing themselves for their children, they are often much more compassionate and empathic, are much more sensitive, and relate more easily to the basics of care and responsibility. At least that is what investigating women's contributions to improvements of living shows. Caring for their offspring creates concern for good conditions. Mothers generally protect and promote the creation of a fostering environment. Experiences with microbanking in, for instance, Africa show time and again that women manage the financial grants they receive in a much more prudent way than do men. In foreign aid, it is well known that it is best to put the future prospects for the children in the hands of women. One wonders what would have happened if the Lehman Brothers had been the Lehman Sisters. This is a joke by European Commissioner Neelie Kroes, but it has some truth to it. Modernization opens the possibility of including the other 50 percent of society.

Wherever women oppose the infringement of their bodily integrity, as in clitoridectomy or other forms of mutilation, and where male supremacy is torn down, new forms of experience can flourish in which the potential of the female experience can be used for a general improvement of the human condition. In many regions of the world, huge psychological barriers have been invented by the males to protect their privileges. Much of the anti-modernization movement, therefore, is the result of sex-specific patterned behavior for which there is a clear remedy: to use science to investigate its underpinnings and do something about it.

The zest with which people in India use the possibilities of the Internet is another example of the attractiveness of modern accomplishments. Here, a modern technique enables people to easily improve their situation. These favorable circumstances are accessible for much larger parts of the

population than ever before. Everywhere in the world, youngsters are keen to understand the uniting rather than the polarizing effects of fashion, music, gadgets, and the lifestyles with which they are closely associated.

To be sure, many examples can be given of the excesses of modernization. Music on MTV, YouTube, and the like, is often accompanied by sexist clips in which it appears that it is normal for women to serve as sex toys. But in such excesses an advantage is hidden as well: by permitting these things within reasonable boundaries, instead of censoring such display of masculine insensitivity, the calibration of the sensorium becomes possible for those who are willing to question what they see and hear. Next to nothing is gained by vetoing such displays; it is much better to discuss it openly. By giving it appropriate attention in education at home and in schools, young people can decide for themselves what feeds their senses in a way that enhances sensitivity. To develop good taste is a matter of allowing for people's own initiative in calibrating their senses amid a community of experts, as we have argued incessantly. Creating such a community is a more viable route to good taste than a simple ban on what is considered bad taste.

### The chance to shape one's own experiences

So far, Western modernization is the most successful attempt to do justice to the human sensorium without excluding anyone on the basis of sex, social stratum, color, age, or denomination. One of the lessons that we can learn from the history of modernization is that once there is room for the experiences of previously excluded people, a clear alternative to the existing order becomes available. The point is that what is good for people presents itself as soon as the means to realize this good become available to everyone, predominantly through technology and trade. We do not intend to say that trade and technology are absolute blessings, but they can catalyze the process of many people designing a better life.

Modernization can be pointed at. It is tangible in the physical world, in infrastructure, in means of communication, in educational and legal institutions, and so on. It is also tangible in people's strivings in all domains of life. This provides new experiences for them. A good example is the experience of independence as the result of broader financial and material means. Many women in Saudi Arabia reluctantly accept that their material well-being is not currently translated into personal freedom to go and stay wherever they want. How long this pressure can be maintained is unknown, but anxiety and terror will eventually give in to the



inevitability of critical experiences, once these make a little headway. The beautiful, intelligent, well-educated, and independent women who present the news on Al Jazeera set an example to many women in the Middle East, as Fatema Mernissi (2004) has argued. One can imagine that through such channels eventually changes will come about that connect better with the acquired prosperity of women.

Everywhere around the globe, modernizing developments occur parallel to the existing social order. In many countries people have no clean water, insufficient hygiene, and poor medical care; but a new communication network for mobile phones and the Internet is being created worldwide. As always, the young soon take advantage of the new possibilities. They are soon in a position to articulate new experiences and perhaps to partially escape their current circumstances. The gadgets and fashion observed in Western lifestyles may help to further shape their ambitions, presenting a world parallel to the existing one, as a source of change.

## **A Positive Agenda**

In addition to the institutional apps that the West exported to the rest of the world, according to Ferguson, we point to the changes in behavioral patterning that are also occurring worldwide, and that often resemble the behavioral patterns in the West. It puts pressure on existing, local patterning of behavior, particularly with respect to the five domains we have singled out. Not all of those changes are necessarily beneficial, but there is apparently something appealing as well to the patterning that originated in the West. We thought to express this appealing Western patterning in the slogan: “the group at the service of the individual.” The slogan means that the behavioral patterns of one’s group should be such that they motivate and stimulate individuals to articulate their own autonomous experiences and ambitions. It implies that there is no room for privileging people at the expense of others; it implies that nobody is excluded from the good life; and it also implies that there is no hidden or explicit sanctioning of the good life under the moral auspices of a religion. These conditions appear to be appealing to everyone, worldwide. That is the open and positive agenda for globalization that we foresee, in which personal experiences of pleasure and comfort (i.e., the sensorium) are the measure. This is not a plea for outright hedonism, for it is precisely by embedding it in the practices of the own group that personal experience needs to be articulated. Without this embedding, egoism and secluding individualism result – which indeed sometimes occur in the West. On the other hand,

without the chance to shape one's own experience, unwanted conformism results. The facilitating group therefore must, as always, find a balance of freedoms and constraints.

Of course we are not the first to set such a humanist agenda. Western liberalism, for instance, heralds similar values such as egalitarianism, freedom, and democracy. These are traced back to the Enlightenment tradition, a seminal intellectual development that occurred in Europe but nowhere else. Nonetheless, it is precisely the proponents of the European Enlightenment who failed to apply science and rationality to improve the circumstances of the masses. The Enlightenment may have fostered a scientific revolution but it did not really bring a humanist revolution, apart from a small and marginal circle of followers of Spinoza. This, at least, is the point that Jonathan Israel makes and it is partly reflected in work by Stephen Toulmin as well. Scientific inquiry and rationality could have and should have been applied much more radically by the proponents of the Enlightenment and by their followers. They should not only have investigated the laws of nature and attempted to control nature's forces but they should also have freed people from inequality and a transcendent moral authority.

## **The Behavioral Impact of the Enlightenment**

The Enlightenment movement is often presented as a European accomplishment with great appeal. It is heralded as the preeminent feat of modernity and it is considered a major project of what Peter Gay in his two-volume study (1966–1969) has called the Enlightenment family of European philosophers: A real European community of scholars who shared comparable ideas, corresponded extensively with each other, and influenced the European princely courts and the higher-educated citizens with their views on state formation, justice, equality, freedom of speech, and tolerance. This, in turn, helped to shape the behavior of many citizens. The Enlightenment is also a project that in recent years gave rise in some European countries to derogatory descriptions in which, for example, people educated in the civilizing offensive of Islam were labeled “backward.” Supposedly, no enlightenment had taken place among these people. Presumably, they had missed out on the movement that gave the Westerners a caring state and the Rule of Law which brought about the protection of personal liberties and an accountable government, but above all created a lifestyle in which one was free to choose one's own position and to follow one's own deep and authentic inclinations.

It is easy to acknowledge this European accomplishment at the level of abstract values. At the level of concrete behaviors things are not so clearly “enlightened,” however. In the West one can indeed find freedom of speech, formal equality between the sexes, the constitutional state, and other Enlightenment results. Yet at a level of concrete behaviors male domination, extremely dysfunctional differences in income, ineffective status management, religious authority, and indoctrination still exist because the Enlightenment program got stuck in compromises, as we intend to show.

### The Enlightenment project in two variants

In the received view, the Enlightenment followed upon and amplified what started in Renaissance humanism. In the Italian Renaissance, the writings of people like Lucretius and Pico della Mirandola prompted the emergence of investigative reasonableness, tolerance, plurality, and ambiguity. The lives of individual people were considered to be unique and colorful. People should not be subjected to unifying rules and theological doctrine since their rich variety depends on many local circumstances. What is therefore required is a readiness to observe and to listen to each other. Michel de Montaigne emphasized that the variety of human experience and character was something to be explored in its own right. In short, as Stephen Toulmin (1990) writes, it was considered much more human to judge each case on its own merits.

Enlightenment thinkers were able to elaborate upon this humanist direction, so the story goes. For example, in the first half of the seventeenth century René Descartes introduced a new method in philosophy by adopting rationality as the only criterion for certainty: See (think) for yourself and judge accordingly. Galileo Galilei innovated research into nature’s laws by radically choosing rationally informed experimentation as the test for truth. These ideas became beacons for the course of the new science. From now on logic and mathematics decided what was truthful. The inquisitiveness of the individual was further facilitated by the growth of cities in which the trammels of religious conventions were slackened and science could be practiced in the spirit of the Renaissance. The rich upper classes had enough money to fund costly research and it stimulated the spread of societies in which natural philosophy was practiced. This once more stimulated the independent investigation of nature, freed from theological restrictions. Reason and rationality became the prime movers of progress and they fostered freedom and individuality. As such, the Enlightenment provided the means for a secular form of salvation from ignorance.

In *Cosmopolis*, Toulmin completely shatters this standard story. First of all, he argues, the rationality to which religion became subjected did not destroy the yoke of religion. On the contrary, after the 1648 Peace of Westphalia, in which the principle of *cuius regio, eius religio* (the ruler of a territory determines its religion) became accepted throughout Europe, religious faith became all the more important in determining people's fate. Benjamin Kaplan (2007) underscores Toulmin's claim. The Peace of Westphalia ended both the Thirty Years War and the Eighty Years War, but religious violence was on the increase nevertheless during the entire seventeenth century. Using the verdict of the Council of Trent (1545–1563) which issued a ban on all Protestant elements of faith, Catholics confronted Protestants in fierce battles. Full of wrath and bitterness, the "heretics" in turn confronted the "papists." Religion had never been a more divisive force. Wealth was dissipated in the high costs of actions to control the people. Europe became unsafe and people in the lower sections of society had never been so needy and poor. Throughout the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, horrific events testified to the persistent strong animosities between believers, among them the killing of the leaders of a Protestant mob after a Jesuit college was severely damaged in what became known as the "Bloodbath of Thorn" in Poland in 1724. The revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685 by Louis XIV caused the Protestant Huguenots to flee from France and escape to the Dutch Republic, England, and elsewhere. In many countries severe laws against Catholics were also enacted, but as usual violence came from both sides. Tolerance was under siege. Why did the promising rationality and science not end this all, Toulmin asks? How is it possible that all this misery took place while reason and rationality were promoted as the yardstick against which all human action should be measured?

The reason, Toulmin argues, is that science was not used at all for the further development of what started with humanism. On the contrary, scientific rationality was deployed to counter uncertainty and ambiguous experience. The elaboration of abstract principles that emphasize only what is general and universal goes directly against the humanist conception of concrete and particular human behaviors and experiences. In other words, the emphasis on single cases and exceptions to the rule that was acquired in the Renaissance was exchanged for Cartesian certainty and Galilean experimentation. In this manner, Toulmin contends, science was not used for the improvement of the human condition but foremost for warding off skepticism and uncertainty. It was mainly deployed for creating a firm stronghold in reality, robbing people of a more doubtful stance in life. That was partly the hidden agenda of modernity, Toulmin claims.

In effect, science created a new “cosmopolis,” a new cosmopolitical order in which the higher classes ruled over the lower and middling classes, with the certainty of a rational mind and with scientifically defended and empirically corroborated decisions. Everybody had his or her place within this newly built order in which mathematical precision and knowledge of a lawful nature guaranteed stability. It became gradually clear, however, according to Toulmin, that science could not live up to its ambitions. It eventually had to accept its boundaries in terms of a failure to explain all facets of the human mind and even had to accept the inevitability of fundamental uncertainty in physics – but by then it was the twentieth century. Having said that, in the large stretch of time between 1700 and 1950, science readily brushed aside skepticism, tolerance of uncertainty, a casuistic attitude to human nature, and a general acceptance of human experience as the measure of all things. Its usurping mastery over nature flourished like never before.

With Toulmin, we might conclude that the Enlightenment project paradoxically resulted in a truncated anti-humanist science which in fact involved too little science, since the full scientific spectrum should also have included the procedural logic of ethics and human behavior. It should have strived for applicable knowledge about human conduct. That is precisely also the point of Spinoza and his followers, as Jonathan Israel has meticulously shown.

### The “Radical Enlightenment”

The Radical Enlightenment, as Israel (2002) calls the strongly contested and therefore marginal Spinozist movement, originated in the prosperous Dutch Republic of the later seventeenth century and spread across the whole of Europe, establishing underground centers of learning occupied by scholars who followed Spinoza. Its proponents were striving for a thorough reform of people’s daily life, based on science and rationality. As such, they were involved in ideas that were to make possible a political administration in which the good life would be available for everyone. In the political order they envisioned, there was no place for superstitious religious belief, no arbitrariness in applying the law, and no unfairness in what was demanded from everyone. The world should be a world without miracles, without fear of the gods, and without providence and other supernatural phenomena. The advocates of the Radical Enlightenment rejected the idea of an afterlife in which earthly conduct was rewarded and where previous suffering was settled. The latter was precisely an instrument the rulers used to keep people in the lower segment of society

in place. Alternatively, the Spinozists, by using their rational minds, wanted to create a world in which all people were of equal worth and had an equal share in prosperity and progress. They did not deny the existence of differences between people, but they rejected a preordained, fixed order from high to low. The guideline for shaping society would be the thorough investigation of human nature. They considered the republican state the most viable institution. The Spinozists tried to establish a form of rationality that would incorporate the best of human feelings by refining the passions in order to promote interpersonal respect.

With respect to science, Spinoza shared Descartes's spirit. However, in Spinoza's scientific and investigative endeavors the emphasis was not on cold methodology and procedure as in Descartes's case. A scientist in the Spinozist spirit was not a solitary figure who used a disconnected reason controlled by a set of anonymous rules, however strict these rules might be. He or she is always embedded in a group of experts and interested others, who use their cognitive and affective capacities to the full. Withdrawing from this kind of group for reasons of personal fame, out of laziness, or for other reasons is against human logic. For Spinoza, scientific reasoning is a social practice in attunement with others in the community of learned and educated people. Only in community is wisdom to be found. Freedom of argument was highly cherished by Spinoza and his followers. Everyone should be able to join the educated community. Of course there is the empirical cycle to obey.<sup>4</sup> But this is so self-evident (and something Spinoza readily adopted from Descartes) that he takes no pains to elaborate on it.

Our interpretation is based on Wim Klever's annotated translations of Spinoza's *Ethica* and *Tractatus de intellectus emendatione*. These works are also a clear demonstration of Spinoza's conviction that the same rational procedures should be applied to nature and natural matters as well as to the everyday lives of human beings, spiritual matters, and the moral order. This once more reflects Spinoza's principle of one substance, which was so strongly contested in philosophical circles. The scope of rationality was not to be restricted beforehand so that important human affairs were left untouched. Science as the preeminent source of normativity – not only on the obvious material plane (“let's make things better”) but also with respect to its behavioral effects and implications – is an essentially Spinozist initiative. We are following it because of the strong conviction that practitioners of science are the only people who engage in an ongoing correction of their premises.

Spinoza's legacy did not really catch on. It was probably too radical and difficult to implement in a world in which the basic values were

usurped by divided religious groups. The only science that was allowed to flourish was the one directed at physical nature, in which the adoption of one single substance could be sidestepped. Defining and shaping moral life did not become the task of science, although the technical impact of science on the material plane and its concomitant behavioral effects always involve normative impact. Anyone committed to that task had to go underground, as Israel shows.

Israel (2006) documents extensively how protest was organized from two sides against some of the most progressive ideas of Enlightenment, pertaining precisely to everyday practice and moral conduct. On the one hand, church leaders and faithful civilian rulers felt that they were threatened by the “heresy” and modernism of the Spinozists. They launched a counterattack by sticking to conservative values and despotic measures. For example, the dividing of people into high and low and assigning to the lower segment the task of serving the higher was not abolished. On the other hand, there were scholars who were ready to accept the scientific outlook on life if they could be convinced that the Christian faith would not be replaced by reason and rationality. They wanted to reconcile Christian faith and science and they were inclined to accept a moderate form of enlightenment. This response clearly was a criticism of the radical variant of enlightenment. The moderate proponents fought absolutism, arbitrariness, and the lack of legal provisions to restrict the power of the absolute rulers. In addition, a form of enlightened despotism was invented in which the exaggerated dependence on church authority was criticized. However, these approaches in no way attacked the existing hierarchical order. Theological compromises with respect to political and moral questions were allowed while God remained an important force in public life. Tradition, the monarchy, local government, social hierarchy, and especially institutions that organized the financial world were left untouched. All kinds of constructions were invented to bypass providence and other articles of faith to ensure that these would continue to be the relevant determinants of moral disputes.

This moderate variant is the Enlightenment that entered the official textbooks, Israel argues. He questions the extent to which Locke, Hume, Montesquieu, and Voltaire were true proponents of an Enlightenment that crossed daggers with unjust institutions and with the arbitrariness of the rulers. Illustrative of Israel’s strong verdict is his assertion that Voltaire – who opposed the divine origin of morals, revelation, and the immortality of the soul, and who considered miracles to be impossible – remained in the moderate camp on a variety of other salient issues that were less polarizing. For example, he defended the importance of a deistic religion based



on a philosophically defensible God-designed universe, thus avoiding atheism. This stance gained him the support of rulers throughout Europe. The point is not that such natural theology is unsound but that it leaves untouched the power imbalances that accompany such preordained world order. It can be used to discourage the exercise of human responsibility.

The standard story of the Enlightenment holds that its advocates really contested religious revelation, theologically-based morals, and the existing hierarchical order. In reality, compromises continued to determine the stakes involved so that the people in lower social strata would continue to obey the unfair demands of those at the top. To enlighten the common lot requires much more than the establishment of the Rule of Law, the separation of powers, the constitutional state, the creation of an accountable government, and a bit of elite and church critique. Having said that, the impact of the moderate Enlightenment should not be minimized either. Particularly the anti-clericalism of this form of Enlightenment helped to dismantle church authority to some extent.

We believe that Israel's distinction between the moderate and the radical variant of Enlightenment resonates with some of Toulmin's complaints about the contra-Renaissance movement that the Enlightenment entailed. The original inspiration of the Renaissance was smothered by the abstract "scientification" of rational thought and by a halfhearted criticism of authority because science itself became part of the ruling establishment, precisely by placing the standards of good science outside the human realm. Toulmin's most radical conclusion is that science eventually became an instrument of power and not, or only to a limited degree, of liberation. Although the benefits of science cannot be ignored, its full application to human affairs in a controllable way, such that the entire scientific enterprise itself is covered, is still wanting. To understand why this is so, it is helpful to consider Israel's contention that the Enlightenment we know is a hybrid product, resulting from the failure to implement its radical variant. The moderate Enlightenment has resulted in important domains of life in a compromise between science and a religious authority, whose executives never were ready to give up their say in how people should behave. Therefore, a truly secular morality never fully developed. The creation of a civil order was never conducted under the aegis of reason and rationality in the full-fledged form that Spinoza originally had intended.

Israel's accounts of both the radical and moderate Enlightenment movement have not been approved by everyone. Many critics attack his preference for the radical variant as the preeminent source of modern life and they contest his selection of authors he put in the camp of the moderates.

Nonetheless, Israel's three massive volumes on the standard Enlightenment, and its radical counterpart, sensitize us to the fact that science and rationality did not affect all of people's lives. Quite the contrary: Existing behavioral patterns with respect to hierarchy, sexual equality, class, and ethnic relationships did not change much. No objection was made to investigating the stars and matter, sickness and health, the machinery of the body, or the physiological workings of the passions. But as soon as everyday patterned conduct was at stake, people were hardly freed from prejudice and certainly not from their belief in Providence and God's grace. God and the devil remained indispensable for the ordering of good and evil. That was certainly not what the Spinozists had in mind.

Not radical but practical science has brought the good life to many

Israel documents how the ideas of Radical Enlightenment failed to be implemented: the standard story of the Enlightenment is about the moderate variant which entails compromises between rational science on the one hand, and the existing worldly and religious authorities on the other. Although this moderate Enlightenment thus for a long time left it to others to control people's everyday lives – which led to anything but free citizens – we currently live in a world in which ever more people are throwing off the moral yokes of religion and ideology. Although for some this may appear to be a paradox because religion sometimes seems more vibrant and visible than in the past, it should be noted that there are many difficulties around religious faith related to its fitting into a modernizing lifestyle. In other words, many believers worldwide struggle to balance their experiences of the good life with religious practice and sense-making. This is a hard nut to crack for Catholics, Protestants, Muslims, Jews, and all other denominations alike.

In a challenging way we might say that the program of the Radical Enlightenment has become partially realized after all in the West, and is slowly being realized in other regions of our globalizing world. However, it was not the radical application of science that brought the good life to many. Rather, it was what we here refer to as “practical science.” The selling point of the lifestyles that originated in the West is the rather unproblematic adaptation to material pleasures, brought forth by incessant inventiveness of creative people in Research & Development departments at universities and commercial companies. We do not mean this in a hedonistic or mere consumerist sense. Rather, material pleasures first and foremost include the vast array of practical things that no one

wants to give up. No matter how soberly people prefer to live, most of them will want to live in a warm and comfortable home, with reliably safe food, purified clean water, financial and social security, property rights and all sorts of other civil rights, health care, an infrastructure for transport and communication, and so on. By no means do these assets imply that people's happiness is guaranteed, but they all contribute to the immediate experiences that life has become easier, more comfortable, or downright better. These innovations have helped to create ways of living and experiences that satisfy the sensorium of people who are free to choose.

It was practical science in particular that was the main force in creating this appealing face of the Western secular civilizing offensive. Once scientific discoveries became translated into technical products and goods that could be traded, the effects of science became tangible for a great many people. This was science at work in the concrete environment of people. Its creative efforts have had consequences for how people all over the world design and shape their daily life. Of course, apart from the blessings of better smart phones or better hygiene, fast foods contain too much salt and fat, and social media can cause constant stress among youth in particular. It is not difficult to list numerous other unwanted effects of modern life, but this predominantly calls for a proper shaping of the new behavioral patterns within the own local group. Once more, this requires the application of full-fledged science, in particular psychology, as the best authority we have to help analyze the problems in terms of embodied practices. The gravest misapplications of science occur when it becomes tied to political power and to economic interests. Such science quickly loses its democratic character and becomes estranged from its controllable mission. That is certainly a risk. However, it is not appropriate to paint all science with the same brush because of the existence of improper applications.

As a final example of the irresistible power of experiences of the good life, we take the fall of the communist regimes in Eastern Europe toward the end of the twentieth century. The Cold War ended when after 1989 the USSR fell apart into independent states. Many historians and politicians want us to believe that communist Eastern Europe collapsed because the ideology of communism became untenable, while liberal capitalism proved to be the only sustainable ideology for a modern world. Yet, a closer look at what the citizens of Russia and its satellite states desired reveals that this included above all more freedom and more material pleasures: significantly more access to such goods and services they heard and saw were common in the West, in order to shape their own

lifestyles in a similar fashion. It is of course only in retrospect that we can hypothesize that the outcry for proper conditions, and for a better personal life for everybody, not just the privileged, put an end to the communist regimes in the years following 1989. The USSR also lost its position of power the moment it became clear that the efforts needed for military supremacy had become too costly. We could say that it was a form of *imperial overstretch*, borrowing once more the term from Paul Kennedy (1987), which turned the USSR into a secondary world player. On the other hand, its people had been confronted with the material pleasures and the luxury of the Western world to such an extent that their craving for material and immaterial improvement could no longer be ignored. People from the DDR (the former East Germany) for example watched West German television channels in the 1970s. It had such an appeal that by the end of the 1980s the entire population of the Eastern Bloc cried out loudly for the alleged blessings of Levis, Mercedes, McDonald's, and Coca-Cola. Ultimately, Mikhail Gorbachev, Erich Honecker, and other leaders did nothing to stop the demolition of the Berlin wall.

After the fall of the communist regimes, everything certainly did not start to improve for everyone and, due to incompetent or corrupt new leaders, many started to long for a restoration of the old regimes. Yet, it is difficult to deny that the appeal of the Western way of living continues to contribute to the protests that can still be heard in the former Soviet Union. Moreover, we continue to see worldwide that what really brings people onto the streets in an outcry for more liberty and prosperity are the prospects of a better life that they know exists elsewhere. It is not radical science that has been pivotal in this regard, but rather the tangible improvement of people's living conditions, which empowers them to shape their own experiences in concordance with their sensorium and with that of others. The "apps" and behavioral patterns that we can observe in increasing regions in the world are predominantly fueled by practical science and trade as carriers of the good life to many.

## Notes

- 1 Pankaj Ghemawat (2011: 26 ff.) presents sobering figures that put globalization in perspective: less than 1 percent of all snail mail is international, less than 2 percent of telephone calls, and between 2006 and 2008 only 17–18 percent of internet traffic passed international borders. Only 2 percent of university students study abroad, 90 percent of news is from domestic sources, 3 percent of the world population are first-generation immigrants, and 90

percent of people worldwide never go abroad. Only 29 percent of gross domestic product comes from exporting products and services from one country to another, and foreign direct investment averages 16 percent; the rest is domestic. Ghemawat circumvents the clash between cosmopolitanism and anti-cosmopolitanism (often described as an important source of conflict in the globalization debate) by coining the notion of rooted cosmopolitanism. He considers a form of cosmopolitanism still rooted in the local community much more viable. This idea is also similar to Roland Robertson's (1995) "glocalization."

- 2 Islam had been divided by faith too, but never with the effect that the core demands of believers were at risk. Almost from the beginning, there were two main divisions: the Caliphs were Sunni, the Persian Muslims were Shi'a, and later on the Muslims of India and further east developed a branch of their own due to a longstanding history of coexistence with various well-supported religions. Conversion to Islam was not a very laborious enterprise. One did not enter a denomination but simply became part of the community of believers – the Ummah – by adopting and living up to the five pillars of faith: believing, praying, fasting, going to Mecca, and giving to the poor. The religious violence between Shi'a and Sunni has a complicated history but it never really threatened the Muslim faith.
- 3 A suggestion which challenges Weber's position is made by Michael Coultas (personal communication): work ethic is more a by-product of hourly paid work. Once work was paid in such terms as a necessary measure in the course of the industrious and industrial revolution, it stimulated more general industrious behavior in the human group. This behavior therefore can not be attributed to an ethic inspired by Protestantism alone, and as Coultas also points out, Catholics (for example) have not noticeably lagged behind Protestants in the United States.
- 4 In modern terms the well-known empirical cycle involves (1) a real problem that can be pointed out in lay terms, (2) sufficient knowledge of previous explanations that now fall short and that have to be improved, (3) a thorough conceptual analysis of the phenomenon at hand and of the new attempts at an explanation, (4) a refutable hypothesis, and finally (5) its empirical testing.

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## Epilogue

The world has probably never been closer to a technical solution for poverty, discomfort, and the exploitation of resources. Never has there been such an opportunity to communicate worldwide and to include people living in the most remote corners of the world. Yet never has the distance between possibilities to improve people's lives and the behavioral patterns to reinforce those innovations been so immense. Technology may also pollute the environment, intensive agriculture may erode the soil, mega-farms may damage the health of animals and humans, financial policies may disadvantage a great many people, and so on. Some of these problems can perhaps be countered with more technology, but what is often overlooked are the behavioral patterns of the people in intrinsic social groups who apply or consume the resources and technological advancements.

Why do people accept that some parts of the world suffer from an insufficient supply of food, while in other parts of the world people continue to throw away a surplus? Why do some people enrich themselves excessively at the expense of others? Why do so many citizens pollute their environment on a massive scale? To argue that it is because of egoism does not provide a satisfactory answer, as we have seen that even egoism

occurs as a socially calibrated phenomenon. Apart from a few clearly pathological cases, egoism results from either insufficient social tuning or from tuning within a specific intrinsic social group that tends to encourage egoistic patterns of behavior. In either case, the tuning of behavior and experience is the core phenomenon to be examined. To say that the practices result from a “culture” of greed is begging the question and therefore altogether unacceptable, as we have argued many times in this book.

Scrutinizing scientifically the styling of feelings, the calibration of experiences, and the training of the prevailing practices, as these occur within an intrinsic social group, is our best bet to gain insight in persistent practices that are detrimental to others. Thus, it is not very helpful simply to blame an individual if his or her practices are obviously embedded in a distinct social environment. Rather than believing that many bankers responsible for the worldwide financial debacle since 2008 are pathological gamblers, idiosyncratic individualists, or wicked conspirers in the creation of destructive financial products, it would be more helpful to investigate how the experiences of these bankers have become tuned in such a way that they see their own clients as impeding their urge to achieve their business targets and to outdo their colleagues, even at the expense of taking clearly irresponsible risks.

It is very difficult for social scientists to get access to such closed intrinsic social groups, as we argued in Chapter 3. Nevertheless, in the Netherlands, Maria Goos, a theatrical director, did get an opportunity to interview some important bankers for her play “De hulp” [The assistant]. She realized that the risk-taking, machismo, and never-ending competition are deliberately arranged by the companies’ top executives. It is our hypothesis that comparable arrangements – which we have found to be so important in the calibration of people’s sensorium and affective system – can be found in other groups that somehow have to make decisions or carry out actions beyond what is reasonable and acceptable, whether in sports, politics, industry, or any other field. This may lead to extraordinary achievements but also to terrible disasters.

Of course, the question is what is “reasonable” and what is not. We do not have a clear answer because “reasonable” is a qualification that varies with different group practices. This again calls for a scientific analysis to clearly identify the mechanisms from which group-specific feelings, tastes, and cognitions result. Science at its best, and in accord with its democratic societal function, is non-moralistic, not even in establishing what constitutes reasonableness and normativity. Instead what counts (or

should count) are well-established facts as part of corroborated theory. That, at least, is the ideal. We are clearly aware of the pressures on scientists to get funding and to get their work published. Yet from the inception of the Radical Enlightenment, the aim was not fame and funding, but the alleviation of the human condition.

Despite the perennial risk of falling short of this aim, we have here defended the ideal of science in its most radical, undivided, and non-moralistic form as a practice that has crucially important things to say about human behavioral patterning. Moreover, it is our hypothesis that the “human measure” can be rediscovered in the sensitive body that privately registers what is pleasant and what is not. By means of this sensorium, people detect suppression and unfairness, exploitation and blatant egoism, stench, filth, and malnutrition. Personal tastes are to a crucial extent socially tuned. That remains an important observation. However, we have also seen that the sensorium cannot be continually stretched beyond the point where experiences become painful. Thus, the socially styled, incorporated human body contains the limits for what is “normal” and what is “reasonable” behavior. It is the task for behavioral science to factually investigate those experiences and the way in which they are shaped.

Insight into behavioral patterning (in the styling of behavior but also the lack thereof) is crucial in a rapidly changing world full of technological and economic innovations. Behavioral innovation cannot, without adverse effects, lag behind. This means, for instance, that the solution to the ever-increasing risk of sick animals and epidemics on mega-farms is not to be found in administering even more antibiotics to the animals (which also implies health risks for humans), but instead in more hygienic practices that involve routine acts of, for example, regularly washing hands and changing into clean work clothes. There are already studies which prove that this is much more effective, and much cheaper. Changing routine practices is also required when people eat too much fat, too much sugar, too much meat, and so on. That is a more effective long-term solution than taking more pills and frequenting the hospital more often. Socially tuned practices are also in need of recalibration if we want executives in big businesses to restore and promote real client contact, instead of fostering the irresponsible squandering of other people’s money. And, in some cases, sportsmen and women should be educated, not merely cognitively as individuals but within example-setting intrinsic social groups, to take personal responsibility for their achievements (as well as their health and happiness), instead of relying on drugs and drug testing

techniques. All these are real-life examples in which the patterning of behavior, feelings, and cognitions within the intrinsic social group of peers and colleagues is the seminal point of application. In our opinion, the behavioral sciences have so far failed to take up this task sufficiently.

We hope that the perspectives in this book will contribute to a viable behavioral scientific approach to such problems. We also hope that our perspectives will help individuals to profit from the security as well as the motivations and possibilities that the group should provide. Although a scientific approach should never be moralistic, in the sense that science “knows” in an absolute sense what is good for everybody, scientific practice can establish how normativity comes about. To an important extent it will be based on people’s sensorium, and its precise calibration will depend on every intrinsic social group in a variety of ways, but the tuning is indispensable for a supportive communal life. That calls for tolerance and dialogue, as the advocates of the Enlightenment movement in all its variety had in mind.

In a book with the ominous title *Dark Ages*, Lee McIntyre (2006) argues for a radical application of behavioral science. McIntyre’s point is not that such a science does not exist; rather, he claims that contemporary economists, philosophers, psychologists, and social scientists obstruct its development and application by broadly ignoring its applicability. Without a rigorous involvement of science with human behavior we truly return to darker times. McIntyre presents many examples for his claim that people prefer to rely on their intuition and cherish their prejudices, instead of seriously scrutinizing their motives. Scientific findings tend to confront us with a world that does not match the world we wish for, he argues, and that would explain the resistance to science. In consequence, and out of fear of being seen as politically incorrect, some practitioners become court scientists, much like the court philosophers in previous centuries. That should be avoided at all times, McIntyre says, and we agree with his suggestion.

In Chapter 9 we encountered the Radical Enlightenment as an important source of far-reaching ideas about human relationships. In that spirit we have tried to sharpen the analytical knife of behavioral science in order to dissect the behavioral patterns in which superstition replaces research; in which barriers are erected to prevent equality between women and men; in which status differences are maintained on the basis of something other than personal merits; in which education and upbringing frustrate full incorporation into the community; and in which “ingroup” and “outgroup” are played off against each other. Today, we have the means to analyze these patterns in greater detail.

As far as we are concerned, the course of civilization may be set on these two beacons – a radical application of science, and the study of the behavioral patterns that people mutually coordinate and sustain.

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# Bibliographical Essay

## Chapter 1 Understanding Culture

The perspective on culture that we developed in this book has been prepared in a number of publications in psychological journals like *Theory & Psychology*, *Culture & Psychology*, and the *Netherlands Journal of Psychology*. The foundations were laid for a psychological analysis of culture in Cor Baerveldt and Theo Verheggen, “Enactivism and the experiential reality of culture: Rethinking the epistemological basis of cultural psychology” (*Culture & Psychology*, 5(2), 1999, 183–206), where the central paradox in the psychological analysis of culture is described: On the one hand there is the innermost feeling of people that they act strictly on their own, whereas on the other hand it is manifest from succinct observations that they clearly follow a group-typical behavioral pattern.

From our psychological perspective or, even better, stated from our behavioral science perspective, culture is the product of the coordination of behavior in human interactions. This results in patterned conduct among individuals who belong to one or more intrinsic social groups. In our opinion, the main task in coming to grips with cultural behavior is the devising of conceptual tools that enable an understanding of the production of such patterned behavior in terms of cognition, affect everyday automaticities, bodily comportment, taste, and the group-bound expres-

sion of these patterns. It leads to a conceptual understanding of what actually goes on in displaying the same behavioral patterns among the members of a certain cultural group. These tools were prepared in the original Dutch version of this book, *Cultuur & Lichaam: Een cultuurpsychologisch perspectief op patronen in gedrag* [Culture & Body: A cultural psychological perspective on patterns in behavior] (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2007). In their article “We don’t share” (*Culture & Psychology*, 13(1), 2007, 5–27), Verheggen and Baerveldt explain what the originating and displaying of similar behavioral patterns involves in terms of mutually coordinated actions, rather than in terms of shared mental representations. In viewing culture as embodiment in this book, we once more emphasize that the cultural patterning of behavior is not simply a mental affair. It is instead thoroughly embodied, in that the lived body is the mutually tuned instrument for normative expression of experiences. (Further bibliographical details on this theme can be found in this essay under Chapter 3.)

The three misunderstandings of culture – culture as a label, culture as excuse, and culture as metaphor – are elaborated for the first time in Cor Baerveldt and Paul Voestermans, “Het misverstand cultuur: Naar een psychologie van biculturaliteit” [Misunderstanding culture: Towards a psychology of biculturalism] (*Nederlands Tijdschrift voor de Psychologie*, 55, 2000, 109–120).

The core business of a psychology dealing with behavioral patterns is meaning. Although we do not fully endorse Jerome Bruner’s message that the meaning given of the *autobiographical* self must lie at the heart of psychology, we agree with his emphasis on meaning. We argue strongly that meaning is impossible without interaction and the practices it involves. Bruner developed his ideas about meaning in *Acts of Meaning* (Harvard University Press, 1990).

Much goes on *inside* a human organism. Yet, the scientific understanding of what goes on *between* people, in the exchanges in human interaction, should not be reduced to inner processes and to the continuous flow of electrochemical proceedings in the participants, no matter how extensively this machinery is involved. Meaning belongs to the sphere of human interaction, which constitutes a separate domain of investigation. Kenneth Gergen has defended this message since the late 1980s. His seminal article “Social psychology and the wrong revolution” (*European Journal of Social Psychology*, 19, 1989, 463–484) includes his famous dictum: “The locus of knowledge is no longer taken to be the individual mind but rather to inhere in patterns of social relatedness” (p. 463). It is in the spirit of this central idea that we put a strong emphasis throughout the book on social embeddedness, that is to say, on what happens *between* people,



instead of trying to search for cultural meanings inside them. In contradistinction to Gergen and others' social constructionism, we focus much more on the embodied embeddedness (or "incorporation") into intrinsic social groups.

We have never come across a selection of domains like the five we present here. But even if we claim that we did not base our theory on an existing text or known argument, we do not claim originality. It is possible that there have been others with the same idea, but we simply do not know. Originality in the sciences is a misplaced concept. In art it is mandatory, but in science it is based on the wrong assumption and the wrong sentiment that whoever has an idea first is important. In science, every practitioner has to realize that she or he is part of a collaborative network. His or her entire education testifies to that fact. What really counts are ideas, not the people who voice them. Ideas are in need of support, not individual scientists. Science is the only institution in which this support can be critically organized, notwithstanding the fact that an individual researcher may go ethically astray. So when we say we have come up with an idea, we merely want to say that we have built on the indispensable work of others, but also that we put our idea forward so that others in turn can produce a better one.

The idea that gender, class, age, ethnicity, and religiosity are of the utmost importance in what happens between people in terms of behavioral patterning seems self-evident. We do not think that a sixth domain can be found which is of equal basic importance, such that it cannot be reduced to those other five. Nevertheless, we kindly invite the reader to find such a sixth central domain and to improve our argument.

## Chapter 2 Inventing Culture Theory

The encounters following the discovery of the New World are documented in Raymond Corbey and Joep Leerssen, *Alterity, Identity, Image: Selves and Others in Society and Scholarship* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1991). The examples of the early cultural confrontations of Darwin and Fitzroy we borrowed from Harry Thompson, *This Thing of Darkness* (London: Headline Review, 2005). It is a novel based on thorough research and gives a fair impression of early nineteenth-century prejudices. The source of the events in the Tahitian waters is presented in episode 22 of the TV series *In het kielzog van Darwin* [In Darwin's wake], broadcast in the Netherlands by VPRO (February 28, 2010).

Bibliographic details about the encounter of Péron with the early inhabitants of the Isle of Marie can be found in Gustav Jahoda's *Crossroads Between Culture and Mind* (New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1992, pp. 58–59). The Torres Straits expedition of 1889 is also related in this book (pp. 120ff.).

The conversation between the Jesuits and the Chinese literati is described in Marshall Sahlins' article, "The sadness of sweetness: The native anthropology of western cosmology" (*Current Anthropology*, 37(3), 1996). Edward Burnett Tylor's idea of culture can be found in *Primitive Culture: Researches into the Development of Mythology, Philosophy, Religion, Art, and Custom* (London: John Murray, 1903, 4th edn.).

The idea to use behavioral science for the analysis of culture runs counter to the received view to put culture in front of everything – in order to derive behavioral features and even scientific practice from the culture at hand. We radically dismiss the idea of a cultural superstructure with an influence of its own. We are not saying that human accomplishments in arts and sciences cannot be subsumed under the notion "culture." It is common parlance to do so. We object to putting the notion of culture in an explanatory framework directed at an understanding of human behavior. That is the explicit choice we defend throughout the book. It implies that culture as such has no explanatory power. Many other scientists are well aware that culture as such does not explain anything, but this awareness is insufficiently acted out in public. In journalism, for example, it is quite common to hold culture responsible for the existence of certain habits or customs. It is our strong conviction that social scientists insufficiently discourage such beliefs. In politics this wrong use of the term is rampant as well, and can be encountered almost daily.

Historically, the term "culture" has inspired culture theory. Since the middle of the eighteenth century, the idea of culture has figured highly in encounters with other regions in the non-Western world. In Jeroen Jansz and Peter van Drunen (eds.), *A Social History of Psychology* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), the thesis was defended that the concept of culture itself became an integral part of the Western civilizing offensive. In that context, culture theory has undeniably inspired psychologists to pay attention to patterned behavior. In showing what this involves for the way in which the culture–behavior nexus was explored we used the chapter "Culture and ethnicity" by Paul Voestermans and Jeroen Jansz.

Another important historical monograph is Gustaf Jahoda's *Crossroads Between Culture and Mind* (see above), from which the incident on

Tasmania is taken. B. Massin's essay "From Virchow to Fischer: Physical anthropology and modern race theories in Wilhelmine Germany" was very helpful in spelling out the intricate attitude towards race in Germany before Hitler's atrocities (in George W. Stocking (ed.), *Volksgeist as Method and Ethic: Essays on Boasian Ethnography and the German Anthropological Tradition*, Madison: Wisconsin University Press, 1996). Details about the anthropological work on the *Völkerpsychologie* of Moritz Lazarus and Hermann Steinthal and its influence on modern culture theory can be found in Ivan Kalmar, "The *Völkerpsychologie* of Lazarus and Steinthal and the modern concept of culture" (*Journal of the History of Ideas*, 48(4), 1987, 671–690).

In *Victorian Anthropology* (New York: Free Press, 1991), George Stocking gives a historical account of anthropological thinking by delineating the contours of the distinct developments of anthropological science in, for example, England, France, and Germany. In the chapter "Culture and ethnicity" in *A Social History of Psychology* (see above) this lead was followed. We in turn follow up on that. Yet, we are solely responsible for the way we focus on France, England, and Germany. The way in which Boas is presented as a German-trained opponent of racism is also an elaboration of what has already been presented in *A Social History of Psychology*.

Christopher Herbert suggests in *Culture and Anomie: Ethnographic Imagination in the Nineteenth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991) that the doctrine of Christian salvation became secularized in the modern notion of culture. We elaborate upon Herbert's suggestion by arguing that this soteriological leaning added to hypostasizing culture. Culture became a source *sui generis* of salutary behavioral influence. Such a position discourages the influence of an account based in terms of concrete people as actors. By turning culture into a separate force, working against biological determinants, biology and culture are put in a deadlock. The attempt to escape from it by arguing that a psychological analysis of culture involves a narrow cooperation between psychology and biology, is entirely our own. In order to escape the fruitless opposition between culture and biology and to avoid at the same time biological reductionism, biological and culture theory approaches should never work against each other. The reason is relatively simple but rarely acknowledged in its full consequences. Peter Hagoort, director of the Max Planck Institute for Psycholinguistics and founding director of the Donders Centre for Cognitive Neuroimaging at Radboud University, both in Nijmegen in the Netherlands, summarized it as follows (our paraphrase): "Where else can what people do, think and feel be prepared other than in our brains? Without

the help of our brains nothing works.” We added to this that the brain always operates in concert with other brains (see below). This position and the core premise that meaning can best be analyzed in a cooperative project of the practitioners of both the behavioral and biological sciences were set out in Paul Voestermans and Cor Baerveldt’s paper, “Cultural psychology meets evolutionary psychology: Toward a new role for biology in the study of culture and experience,” in John Moss, Niamh Stephenson, and Hans van Rappard (eds.), *Theoretical Issues in Psychology* (Boston: Kluwer, 2001, 69–81).

The notion of brains and organisms in the plural is not our invention. In his contribution to Steven Rose’s edited book *From Brains to Consciousness? Essays on the New Sciences of the Mind* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998), Wolf Singer suggested the importance of brains and organisms in the plural. The catchphrase “one brain is no brain” in Hendrik Spiering’s article “Eén brein is geen brein: Nieuwe studies over de hersenen” [One brain is no brain: New studies about the brain], in the Dutch newspaper *NRC-Handelsblad*, March 26, 1999, is a paraphrase of Singer. Consciousness, language, the self, free will, and other typically human faculties do not emerge from a single brain and organism, but presuppose coordinated action of multiple brains and organisms. This idea is gaining further acceptance but it runs counter to the current tendency in much brain research to take as one’s point of departure as the single, isolated brain. In our opinion, it leads to a failure to understand the thoroughly interactive bases of the production of meaning.

Our idea of evolution but particularly our overall enactivist perspective is heavily influenced by Humberto Maturana and Francisco Varela (see also the bibliography in Chapter 3). Important sources for us in the current chapter include their book *The Tree of Knowledge: The Biological Roots of Human Understanding* (Boston: Shambhala, 1992), as well as Francisco Varela, Evan Thompson, and Eleanor Rosch, *The Embodied Mind: Cognitive Science and Human Experience* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1991).

From Maurice Merleau-Ponty we got the idea that symbolic behavior is something that characterizes human beings in a very distinctive way, and that sets the human species apart from all other animals. This is by no means a religious position; it is a corollary of human auto-imagination (see the bibliography in the next chapter for more details). Merleau-Ponty describes his views on symbolic behavior in *The Structure of Behavior* (Boston: Beacon Press, [1942]1963). Unlike animals, humans can move away from what their bodily dispositions dictate. Through the faculty of

auto-imagination they have more degrees of freedom than other animals, which eventuates in symbolic behavior, that is to say behavior with a reference to what the group has designated as being obligatory or useful. In A. Lock and C. Peters (eds.), *Handbook of Human Symbolic Evolution* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), a variety of articles can be found which are inspirational for the idea of biological affordances of meaning, the role of the body, and the interconnectedness of cultural and biological meanings in practice. Yet, it is our idea that biological facts have to be integrated in acquired group-related meanings.

Pierre Bourdieu's *Logic of Practice* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, [1980]1990) had a strong bearing on our emphasizing the danger of a mismatch between early acquisition and new situational involvements later in life. Equating the acquisition of behavioral patterns with how, in sports, certain skills are mastered under the supervision of skilled practitioners is our own idea.

### Chapter 3 A Psychological Perspective on Culture

We start in this chapter from the position – supported by Tomasello's research (see below) – that human beings possess certain cognitive abilities that provide them with more degrees of freedom than other animals. It enables humans to make larger cognitive steps, such as auto-imagination, a huge language system, and the awareness that they are restricted by normative constructions of their own making. Free will is another typical human asset that finds its origin in elaborate coordinated interactions. It is in those interactions that the lines one should not cross and the things one should cherish are made explicit. As Herman Kolk has made clear in his book *Vrije wil is geen illusie: Hoe de hersenen ons vrijheid verschaffen* [Free will is *no* illusion: How the brain affords us freedom] (Amsterdam: Bert Bakker, 2012), free will is coextensive with what communal allowances and restrictions dictate. Outside such communal affordances free will is nonsense.

We also side with Michael Tomasello in his books *The Cultural Origins of Human Cognition* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999) and *Why We Cooperate* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2009), and we consider human collaboration much more extensive than its animal counterpart. Particularly the auto-imaginative capacity is in our view distinctively human – this idea has at least not yet been refuted by empirical findings. Human symbolic behavior often goes far beyond the actual physical presence of things and other social beings, which makes intricate

advanced planning possible. That the social is primordial, or at least something that cannot be reduced to the inner workings of the human organisms involved, is an idea that we place in the center of our argument throughout the book.

The normativity of social interactions was prepared in earlier publications in which we elaborated upon our particular brand of enactivism. See Cor Baerveldt and Paul Voestermans, "Culture, emotion and the normative structure of reality" (*Theory & Psychology*, 15(4), 2005, 449–473), which is mentioned in the main text. Enacted, embedded, and embodied cognition presuppose second-order coordinations, which lie at the basis of every explicitly formulated norm or value. Whereas the enactive approach in general has focused on sense-making as an embodied and situated or embedded activity, the reformulation of enactivism by Cor Baerveldt and Theo Verheggen emphasizes the expressive and dynamically enacted nature of meaning in behavioral coordination, which involves more levels of mutual coordination than simply the single organism's coordination of action in a physical environment. See C. Baerveldt and T. Verheggen, "Enactivism," in Jaan Valsiner (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Culture and Psychology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012); T. Verheggen and C. Baerveldt, "From shared representations to consensually coordinated actions: Toward an intrinsically social psychology," in J.R. Morss, N. Stephenson, and H. van Rappard (eds.), *Theoretical Issues in Psychology* (Boston: Kluwer, 2001, pp. 59–67); T. Verheggen and C. Baerveldt, "We don't share: The social representation approach, enactivism and the ground for an intrinsically social psychology" (*Culture & Psychology*, 13(1), 2007, 5–27); T. Verheggen and C. Baerveldt, "Mixed up perspectives: Reply to Chryssides et al. and Daanen and their critique of enactive cultural psychology" (*Culture & Psychology*, 18(2), 2012, 272–284). These publications situate enactivism within a tradition of expressivist thinking that has historical roots in radical Enlightenment thought and Romantic reactions to the rationalization of human nature, as well as in the seminal work of Humberto Maturana and Francisco Varela. It reconciles human biology with an account of meaning as irreducibly normative. By emphasizing the consensual rather than the supposedly shared nature of meaningful conduct, this reformulation of enactivism avoids some of the classical pitfalls in thinking about behavior production in human groups by understanding sense-making not as a mediated activity, but as a competence acquired through training in the social group as the most influential feature of the environment in which personal stylization is embedded. The idea that norms and values have no motivating force in and of themselves, but only refer to an existing communal practice, is a corollary of this view.



Humberto Maturana and Francisco Varela were very influential in the articulation of our views. They emphasize that cognition is not organized in some sort of human mental cockpit in which displays of reality are monitored. Instead, it is enacted in the course of human practice, which is always embedded in the group. Maturana and Varela line their thinking up with the basic tenets of phenomenology in that regard. The long-standing phenomenological tradition of conceptualizing cognition in terms of embodiment, enactment, and its siting in embedded and extended constructions like external memory aids, artificial limbs, etc. (see also Andy Clark, *Supersizing the Mind: Embodiment, Action, and Cognitive Extension*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), has recently been revived. See Richard Menary, "Introduction to the special issue on 4E cognition" (*Phenomenology and the Cognitive Sciences*, 9(4), 2010, 459–463). Important in this respect was also Evan Thompson, *Mind in Life: Biology, Phenomenology, and the Sciences of Mind* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007). Another valuable source was Mark Rowland's *The New Science of the Mind: From Extended Mind to Embodied Phenomenology* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2010). Alva Noë, *Out of Our Heads* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2010) was helpful as well.

Although the distinction between body 1 and body 2 is of our own making, body 2 is largely based on *le corps vécu* or *le corps sujet*, the lived body of Merleau-Ponty presented in *Phenomenology of Perception* (London: Routledge, [1945]2002). His idea of the lived body had a strong bearing on the notion of embodiment as we use it throughout the book. It has inspired a new look in cognitive psychology to which even robotics takes recourse, as was demonstrated in the BBC program *Horizon* of April 3, 2012.

The concept of body 2 includes Marcel Mauss's existing ideas about body practice and body techniques. This elaboration can be found in Marcel Mauss, *Sociology and Psychology* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1979), originally "Les Techniques du corps" [The Techniques of the Body] (*Journal de Psychologie*, 32(3–4), 1936, 271–293). It inspired our use of bodily practice.

It is impossible to mention all the scholarly texts that have contributed to our views of emotion and feeling. It is a much-debated subject in psychology that has culminated in the so-called "affective science." Affective science is in fact an extension of the 4E approach of cognition. It is also known as the cognitive unconscious, unreflective action, and situated practice. Details can be found in Erik Rietveld, "Situated normativity: The normative aspect of embodied cognition in unreflective action" (*Mind*,



117, 2008, 973–1001) and Erik Rietveld, “Unreflective action: A philosophical contribution to integrative neuroscience” (dissertation, University of Amsterdam, 2008).

Affect’s bearing on human interaction has been recognized throughout psychology’s history, but it has become fully so only in the past decade. This was hastened by the recognition of two systems that rule human behavior production: a slow and a fast one, as has been argued by Daniel Kahneman in *Thinking, Fast and Slow* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2011). When we prepared Part One, we could not profit from Kahneman’s book. Yet the grist of his argument was known from his articles with Amos Tversky, reprinted in his book, and from the studies of affective life in which two systems are proposed. Robert Zajonc did this in “Feeling and thinking: Preferences need no inferences” (*American Psychologist*, 35, 1980, 151–175). Richard Lazarus made a comparable distinction in *Emotion and Adaptation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), using the notion of primary and secondary appraisal (cognition 1 and cognition 2). Emotions are involved in primary appraisal (cognition 1) whereupon further deliberation or secondary appraisal (cognition 2) takes care of the necessary refinement and the deployment of feelings in social exchange.

A second relevant distinction is made between hyper- and hypocognized emotions by Robert Levy, “Emotion, knowing and culture,” in Richard Shweder and Robert LeVine (eds.), *Culture Theory: Essays on Mind, Self, and Emotion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984, pp. 214–237). In some communities emotions and feelings are highly articulated or blurred depending on the behavioral domain. This idea is very important in understanding the social form and embeddedness of emotion and feeling, particularly with respect to its shaping and refinement. Antonio Damasio’s books *Looking for Spinoza: Joy, Sorrow and the Feeling Brain* (Orlando, FL: Harcourt, 2003) and *Self Comes to Mind: Constructing the Conscious Brain* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2010) have been very helpful in articulating our view on the social form of feeling. Although Damasio remains very close to William James and uses Spinoza in a very personal way, we think that he has provided a neurological basis for a clear distinction between emotion and feeling. It is a distinction that is often blurred, which obscures the fact that the affective system is cognitively penetrable. This penetrability is crucial for an understanding of the communal improvements in the shaping and styling of people’s feelings. In that respect it is important to understand the way in which Cartesian ideas about passion have overruled Spinozan interpretations. Descartes’s short note on *Les Passions de l’âme* [The Passions of

the Soul] from 1649 leaves less room for communal styling and refinement than does Spinoza's treatment of passion and its control. We like to add that machine-like conceptualizations of emotions directly derived from Cartesian views have in fact slowed down the development of affective science in psychology. Our position is in accord with Spinoza's own polemic with Descartes in the fifth part of *Ethica*.

The distinction between intrinsic social groups and aggregate groups has a long history in the social and behavioral sciences. We think it is insufficiently used in understanding social behavior in an ecologically valid way. Too much understanding is based on the construction of artificial instead of real groups. Another term for "intrinsically social" is "informal" as opposed to "formal," that is to say the construction of groups on the basis of formal criteria selected by the researcher. However, "informal" does not necessarily mean that the group is really experienced by every member. It just points to some sort of spontaneous process of creation, which is insufficient in our view. "Intrinsically social" by contrast implies full awareness of group membership. We therefore comply with the distinction made by John Greenwood in his book *Realism, Identity and Emotion: Reclaiming Social Psychology* (London: Sage, 1994). Intrinsic social groups really exist on the basis of agreements, conventions, and arrangements (ACAs) and can be pointed at in vivo, so to speak. The way we have used ACAs as social identifiers is solely our own responsibility, as are our ideas about articulation and involvement.

The idea of automaticity derives directly from research done by John Bargh and his group. See for example John A. Bargh, "The automaticity of everyday life", in *The Automaticity of Everyday Life* (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum, 1997, pp. 1–61); John A. Bargh and Tanya L. Chartrand, "The unbearable automaticity of being" (*American Psychologist*, 54(7), 1999, 462–479); and Ran Hassin, James Uleman, and John Bargh (eds.), *The New Unconscious* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005). We used these studies in formulating our own position. In contradistinction with the so-called "smart unconscious" approach (see Ap Dijksterhuis, Maarten W. Bos, Loran F. Nordgren, and Rick B. van Baaren, "On making the right choice: The deliberation-without-attention effect" (*Science*, 311, 2006, 1005–1007), we like to emphasize how much the so-called cognitive unconscious has in fact been trained, and *needs* to be trained through coordinated action which is embedded in a community. This idea once more comes from Antonio Damasio, *Self Comes to Mind* (see above).

The popular books and series on brain plasticity base their claims predominantly on Bryan Kolb's *Brain Plasticity and Behavior* (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum, 1995) and on research since then.

## Chapter 4 Sex: The Shaping of Sex and Gender

The notion of gender (role) was introduced by John Money; see “The concept of gender identity disorder in childhood and adolescence after 39 years” (*Journal of Sex & Marital Therapy*, 20(3), 1994, 163–177). See also Money’s book, *Love and Sickness: The Science of Sex Gender Difference and Pair Bonding* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980). The experiment and painful consequences for the boy turned into a girl can be found in John Colapinto, *As Nature Made Him: The Boy Who was Raised as a Girl* (New York: HarperCollins, 2000).

Peggy Sanday’s study *Female Power and Male Dominance: On the Origins of Sexual Inequality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981) is a very instructive early text dealing with the widespread occurrence of asymmetry and dominance in human groups worldwide. Sandy was not the only one who hinted at the general discourse in which male action and female passivity prevail (see her book *A Woman Scorned: Acquaintance Rape on Trial* (New York: Doubleday, 1996). Other studies confirm the omnipresent communal arrangements of violence against women, such as Marie Vlachová and Lea BIASON (eds.), *Women in an Insecure World: Violence Against Women – Facts, Figures and Analysis* (Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces, 2005). However, as Maria Lepowsky remarks in *Fruit of the Motherland: Gender in an Egalitarian Society* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), women are often more powerful than the general discourse of repression suggests. Peggy Sanday’s contribution “Female status in the public domain,” in Michelle Rosaldo and Louise Lamphere (eds.), *Woman, Culture, and Society* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1974, pp. 189–206), provides useful information about the full situation, and not just on the level of discourse. This book is an important correction but it does not diminish the actual violence.

The sexual practices derived from the one- and two-sex model can be found in the literature about classical times and the premodern era. The Greeks are described by John Winkler in *The Constraints of Desire: The Anthropology of Sex and Gender in Ancient Greece* (New York: Routledge, 1989). The premodern era is described by Thomas Laqueur in *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990). The swing between ritualization, de-ritualization of sex, and the role of the sensorium is our own interpretation of developments in the area of love, sex, and gender as described by Irvin Singer in his trilogy *The Nature of Love* (Chicago: University of

Chicago Press, 1984–1987) and the others we mention. Michel Foucault's important trilogy, *The History of Sexuality* (*Introduction*, *The Use of Pleasure*, and *The Care of the Self*) (New York: Vintage Books, [1976–1984]1990) suggested the importance of ritual and control. Peter Brown's *Body and Society: Men, Women, and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988) has been important for a concise interpretation of Christian love.

From Irving Singer also comes the idea that courtly love initiated secularization since this way of creating a bond between men and women rivaled the belief that this bond foreshadowed the intimate relation between God and a faithful believer. Denis de Rougemont's *Love in the Western World* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1983) is still a powerful interpretation of *Agape*, that is, of the typically Christian love between spouses. It is our own interpretation that this idea of love was very important in the creation of, ideally, an egalitarian bond between a married couple, which no longer needed parental approval and which was subjected to churchly, that is to say, priestly blessing only. The key text arguing for attention to be paid to this marriage model is Tine de Moor and Jan Luiten van Zanden, *Vrouwen en de geboorte van het kapitalisme in West-Europa* [Women and the birth of capitalism in Western Europe] (Amsterdam: Boom, 2006). The authors have presented their argument in abridged form in English in "Girl power: The European marriage pattern and labour markets in the North Sea region in the late medieval and early modern period" (*Economic History Review*, 63(1), 2010, 1–33). *Agape* is probably the source of ideals with respect to more equal relations between the sexes as generally endorsed since the Enlightenment. We did not derive our insight from Francis Fukuyama, but the fact that he discusses this development in Chapter 16 of his book *The Origins of Political Order: From Prehuman Times to the French Revolution* (London: Profile Books, 2011), and that he deems it crucial for the unique undermining in the Western world of patriarchy, is greeted by us as relevant support of our conclusions. Fukuyama does not mention the ideal of *Agape* but his description of marital relationships borders on the same idea.

Michel Foucault's trilogy on sex history, mentioned above, describes for the very first time the role of science in giving sex the impact it has in the Western world. The denial of the flesh in Christianity is a received idea that had a great impact on the styling of sex in the Western world. See on this point Karlheinz Deschner, *Das Kreuz mit der Kirche: Eine Sexualgeschichte des Christentums* [The Cross with the Church. A Sexual History of Christianity] (Munich: Econ, 1986). When compared to what the East has provided in terms of sexual techniques that still can be reanimated, it becomes clear that people in the West can still tap

important sources for the renewal of sexual conduct. Frits Staal's essay "Homosexuality in Asia," in his book *Drie bergen en zeven rivieren* [Three mountains and seven rivers] (Amsterdam: Meulenhoff, 2004) is a point in case. It was indispensable in our becoming aware of the imbalance that still exists in the styling of sexual behavior compared to other bodily practices, for example those in sports. In the main text, we also used Staal's *Rules Without Meaning: Ritual, Mantras and the Human Sciences* (New York: Peter Lang, 1989).

The importance of the education of the senses in the sexual domain is of course a corollary of our general emphasis on training and practice in behavioral patterning. The suggestion that the East has more to offer in terms of body techniques and the styling of sex – certainly if we look at the past – is entirely our own, as is the suggestion that men should be much more intensely involved in caring for others, including childcare. That limiting biological restrictions can be compensated by group-based arrangements is defended throughout this book with arguments that derive from how behavioral patterning works.

## Chapter 5 Status: The Body of Class and Organized Compliance

The choice not to focus on the self-proclaimed anti-establishment stance of the lower-status groups as exploited in populist political movements, but to deal instead with these ranks in terms of why certain behavioral patterns in the higher-status ranks of society do not disseminate to other levels of society, is a crucial one. It helps to focus on behavioral patterning as elucidated in Part One. We are aware of these anti-elite sentiments, but they are not the main concern of our book.

We claim that Thorstein Veblen's suggestion in *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (New York: Macmillan, 1899) of impression management and Charles Wright Mills' idea in *The Power Elite* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1956) that the elite's main concern is power and influence, point to the same desire of the upper strata to set themselves apart from the lower segment of society. It is a form of behavioral patterning that needs serious attention in order to understand its normative implications, we think. In *The Fall of Public Man* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977) Richard Sennett develops the idea that this behavior is modeled after aristocratic forms but evolved its own distinctiveness. Chris Bayly's *The Birth of the Modern World 1780–1914* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004) describes in more detail the form that this took.

We explain what this involves behaviorally by our own psychological reworking of Pierre Bourdieu's concept of habitus. A good introduction to Bourdieu's work is Derek Robbins, *The Work of Pierre Bourdieu* (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1991). Bourdieu's books *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, [1979]1987) and *The Logic of Practice* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, [1980]1990) are key texts. We admire Bourdieu's rich description of how status relations are reproduced, but we prefer the advancements in modern cognitive and affective science and psychology for an explanation. In our view, much of sociology is lacking an appropriate notion of agency. We agree with Bourdieu's focus on the body and bodily practice, of course, but we consider modern psychology mature enough to deal appropriately with the social aspects of human behavior. As already argued in Part One, we consider it fruitful to rework the anthropological notions in, for example, Marcel Mauss, "Les techniques du corps" [The Techniques of the Body] (*Journal de Psychologie*, 32(3-4), 1934; reprinted in Marcel Mauss, *Sociologie et anthropologie* [Sociology and Anthropology], Paris: PUF, 1936) and to put his seminal concept of body techniques in a psychological perspective. Furthermore, in sociology class relationships are often dealt with at the aggregate level. For the monitoring of class relations, employment rates, safety in the neighborhood, and so on, sociology is a very powerful policy instrument. However, conspicuous consumption, greed, upward mobility, and other themes that we deal with in Chapter 5 require a calibration of the senses in the intrinsic social group. We believe this to be a necessary perspective that should be added to the standard sociological treatment of class and ethnicity.

The notion of the body of class and the ethnic body are elaborations along the lines of body techniques and body practices as presented in Part One. The idea of fit versus misfit is again adapted from Bourdieu. The idea that language is primarily a body technique is suggested by Bourdieu in "The economy of linguistic exchanges" (originally published in 1982), Part I of *Language and Symbolic Power* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991).

## Chapter 6 Age: The Optimal Balance of Love and Challenge

The two themes of love and challenge are standard in the field of developmental psychology; the almost literal incorporation of youngsters in the intrinsic social group and how this operates, is not. The de-particularization of the body as an important instrument in social exchange is a new approach



to this incorporation. We combine the documented decorations of the body as in Robert Brain's *The Decorated Body* (New York: Harper & Row, 1979) with our own emphasis on the body as the identifier of belonging and cohesion. Clearly visible bodily identification makes the borders of one's own group hard to cross, we suggested. The body becomes a point of application of fashion, style, music, and so on.

The theme of attachment is most robustly researched in developmental psychology. It belongs to the hard core of empirically corroborated psychological knowledge. What we know about attachment predominantly comes from research by Marinus van IJzendoorn in the Netherlands. The key publication for us is M. van IJzendoorn, C. Schuengel, and M. Bakermans-Kranenburg, "Disorganized attachment in early childhood: Meta-analysis of precursors, concomitants, and sequelae" (*Development and Psychopathology*, 11, 1999, 225–249). The inaugural lecture of Marianne Riksen-Walraven "Wie het kleine niet eert . . . Over de grote invloed van vroege sociale ervaringen" [He that cannot keep a penny . . . On the important influence of social experience] (Radboud Universiteit Nijmegen, 2002), summarizes the literature that we used for our view of arranging the care and seeing it primarily as a body technique. Her description of the Beng and Bali people can be found there. The emphasis on the wider community is our own.

The neurological evidence of a crucial phase and time limit in the development of the orbitofrontal cortex, as presented in Riksen-Walraven's work, emphasizes the importance of communal support. Without wider community arrangements that predispose mothers to invest in stimulating their offspring, insufficient enduring differentiation in the brain will take place. Here, neurology hints at the importance of the intrinsic social group without specifying its impact. We found unexpected support in Judith Rich Harris, *The Nurture Assumption: Why Children Turn Out the Way They Do* (New York: Free Press, 1998), who singles out one communal group: peers.

The blessing of the father motive was personally suggested to us by Peter Naus, a social psychologist at Waterloo University, Canada. We endorse David Servan-Schreiber's emphasis on the healing influence of doing things together, instead of drugging the individual organism. The role of the group is, however, understated in his book *The Instinct to Heal: Curing Depression, Anxiety and Stress Without Drugs and Without Talk Therapy* (New York: Rodale, 2004 [issued in the UK under the title *Healing Without Freud or Prozac*]). As usual, the emphasis is on the isolated brain in an isolated single organism – a view to which we strongly object.



Michael Howe, Jane Davidson, and John Sloboda's article "Innate talents: Reality or myth?" (*Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, 21, 1998, 399–442) provides in our view additional scientific evidence for Malcolm Gladwell's *Outliers* (New York: Little, Brown, 2008). We use this article to corroborate the importance of motivation and training. Partial high intelligence does exist of course. Yet, having finished primary school successfully is generally proof of sufficient mental capacity. Without practice and stimulation in the wider community of parents, teachers, and peers, the flexible brain (which, as recent neuropsychological findings have demonstrated, continues to reorganize its pathways far into the 20s, maybe even longer) does not receive sufficient input. Evidence can again be found in the various publications of Riksen-Walraven and her team. See for example H.J.A. van Bakel and J.M.A. Riksen-Walraven, "Behavioral and adrenocortical attunement in parent–infant dyads: A replication in one-year-olds" (*Developmental Psychobiology*, 50(2), 2008, 196–201).

During the development of the brain, compensation for structural shortage is possible, which again makes the group indispensable since this compensation is community-bound. Slow performers for example often suffer from the prejudice in the general public that they are not that smart. However, people who are good at maths tend to work slowly. These ideas are corroborated by research carried out by A. van der Ven into the nature and measurement of intelligence. His theory can be found in "A theoretical foundation of speed and concentration tests," in Frank Columbus (ed.), *Advances in Psychology Research*, vol. 4 (Hauppauge, NY: Nova Science Publishers, 2001). We side with his verdict on intelligence tests: Existing tests fail to assess cognitive capacity. Most tests measure school advancement, rather than cognitive capacity. Van der Ven proposes a test which measures the fluctuation of distraction and attention as a bodily process that differs from person to person and that is an indicator of cognitive capacity. His claims can be found in various publications in the *Journal of Mathematical Psychology*. Further details can be found in the aforementioned paper. A short history of IQ can be found in Jeroen Jansz and Peter van Drunen (eds.), *A Social History of Psychology* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004).

The claim of evolutionary psychologists that adults who retain a somewhat childish face are considered to be more attractive, can be found at: [http://en.wikibooks.org/wiki/Relationships/How\\_Men\\_Select\\_Women](http://en.wikibooks.org/wiki/Relationships/How_Men_Select_Women), accessed March 28, 2013. The research cited here also suggests that a feminized face, for either women or men, is considered to be more attractive in different races.

## Chapter 7 Ethnicity: Cultural Arrests and Bicultural Competence

The former department of cultural psychology at Radboud University, Nijmegen had a long-standing tradition of emphasizing practice and training in cultural exchange. The Russian cultural historical school of Alexander Luria and Lev Vygotsky took the lead in this approach. Action is central to their view. The same ideas can be found in James Wertsch, *Mind as Action* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998) and *Voices of the Mind: A Sociocultural Approach to Mediated Action* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991).

Identity as a process comprises the core of this practice. We encountered this idea for the first time in John Greenwood, *Realism, Identity and Emotion: Reclaiming Social Psychology* (London: Sage, 1994). The need to belong is central to this “identifying.” Roy Baumeister and Mark Leary list the fundamental arguments in favor of the need to belong in their article “The need to belong: Desire for interpersonal attachment as a fundamental human motive” (*Psychological Bulletin*, 117(3), 1995, 497–529). We further used in this chapter Baumeister’s “Is there anything good about men?” (American Psychological Association, Invited Address, 2007, <http://www.psy.fsu.edu/~baumeistertice/goodaboutmen.htm>, accessed March 28, 2013).

We derived our optimism with respect to the success of the multicultural society from Jan Lucassen and Leo Lucassen, *Winnaars en verliezers: Een nuchtere balans van vijfhonderd jaar immigratie* [Winners and losers: A sober balance of five hundred years of immigration] (Amsterdam: Bert Bakker, 2011). This book defies the negativism of the populist movements in various European countries, particularly in the Netherlands. It emphasizes the importance of the multicultural influx that has helped to shape the West.

Dutch “pillarization” as the recipe for integrating religious denominations was first discussed by A. Lijphart, *Verzuiling, pacificatie en kentering in de Nederlandse politiek* [Pillarization, pacification, and change in Dutch policy] (Amsterdam: De Bussy, 1968). A later analysis by Peter van Dam in *Staat van verzuiling: Over een Nederlandse mythe* [State of pillars: A Dutch myth revised] (Amsterdam: Wereldbibliotheek, 2011) deals with the problem of unity and diversity in terms of a nuanced view of the uniqueness and effectiveness of this pillarization. The group of people who were only very loosely affiliated with any classical religious denomination, or did not

belong to one at all, increased particularly in the prosperous 1950s and early 1960s. We like to emphasize Lijphart's suggestion that there has always been elitist exchange between the pillars, that is to say at the top of society, but what was going on at the bottom remained unclear. Certainly the secularization in terms of what we have named "degregalization" (see Chapter 8) cut people loose from traditional denominational ties. Integration problems of class and ethnic groups have always been present in the post-1945 decades of cultural turmoil. The exchange between groups at the top and bottom of society remains limited, as is particularly the case with religious groups that do not belong to the religious establishment, like Muslims in the Netherlands. It is our own suggestion that in such cases one has to turn to the few people in those groups who somehow adapt to the new situation.

The rejection of integration as an all or nothing process reprises John Berry's position as elucidated in Part One. We make a clear distinction between what can be copied, such as material well-being, and what needs to be loosened up, so to speak, in order to make it more accessible for change. Examples of the latter include gender roles, authority, and power relations. Berry's model can be found in his article "Conceptual approaches to acculturation," in Kevin Chun, Pamela Balls Organista, and Gerardo Marín, *Acculturation: Advances in Theory, Measurement, and Applied Research* (Washington, DC: APA Books, 2003).

The idea of cultural arrests is our own adaptation of arrests in biological development. Arrests in biology prevent the normal growth of parts of the organism because of, for example, accidents or impaired metabolism, while the overall development continues. Something comparable happens in cultural arrests: Behavior acquired in an intrinsic social group remains fixated on existing patterns that are out of touch with the new situation. It leads to a misfit between the acquired behaviors and their application in new situations.

Bicultural competence is a useful concept in understanding ethnic relations. It should be studied in intrinsic social groups and can also be used for research into local practices. Micha de Winter's technique of "peer research" is a point in case. See M. de Winter, M. Kroneman, and C. Baerveldt, "The social education gap: Report of a Dutch peer-consultation project on family policy" (*British Journal of Social Work*, 29, 1999, 903–914) as well as M. de Winter and M. Noom, "Someone who treats you as an ordinary human being: Homeless youth examine the quality of professional care" (*British Journal of Social Work*, 33, 2003, 325–338). Our understanding of bicultural competence was also shaped to an important extent by Teresa LaFromboise, Hardin L. Coleman, and Jennifer

Gerton, “Psychological impact of biculturalism: Evidence and theory” (*Psychological Bulletin*, 114(3), 1993, 395–412).

The theme of “implicit racism” is vast and diverse. For our argument we used the research done in the Radboud Immersive Virtual Environment Research Laboratory (RIVER-lab) at Radboud University, Nijmegen under the direction of Daniel Wigboldus. We combine our own elaboration of the distinction that Antonio Damasio has made between emotions and feelings (e.g., in *Looking for Spinoza: Joy, Sorrow and the Feeling Brain*, Orlando, FL: Harcourt, 2003) with ideas about a separate affective system that is generally subsumed under “thinking fast” as contrasted with the slow thinking of rational proceeding and conscious thought. As we said above, we could not profit from the book by Daniel Kahneman, *Thinking Fast and Slow* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2011). This distinction can be helpful in understanding implicit racism and builds on work done with the implicit association test. See also Anthony Greenwald, Brian Nosek, and Mahzarin Banaji, “Understanding and using the Implicit Association Test: An improved scoring algorithm” (*Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 85(2), 2003, 197–216). The findings of Jennifer A. Richeson, Sophie Trawalter, and J. Nicole Shelton, “African Americans’ implicit racial attitudes and the depletion of executive function after interracial interactions” (*Social Cognition*, 23(4), 2005, 336–352), suggest that unconscious intuition is in fact habitual practice and is also triggered among African Americans in threatening situations.

## Chapter 8 Faith: Religion as Man-made Order

The qualification of religious belief or faith as a special case of the indispensable human cognitive and affective capacity of believing is, in our view, a fruitful starting point in discussing the resilience of religion and its endemic character. It is our own invention, suggested by modern cognitive science, in which meaning is always interpersonal and as such is the necessary stuff that human relations are made of. It is not very helpful to reduce this interpersonal meaning to electrochemical proceedings in the brain and organism of *homo clausus*, as we have argued throughout this book. (We adapted the notion of *homo clausus* from Norbert Elias, who used it to denote the autonomous individual in his main work *The Civilizing Process* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000, rev. edn.)). Our position is fueled by dissatisfaction with what we consider a rather abstract scholarly dispute between avowed atheists and strong believers, as exemplified in many

texts about atheism and its refutation. Herman Philipse, *God in the Age of Science? A Critique of Religious Reason* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012) is a good introduction to these kinds of disputes. From the cognitive behavioral science perspective that we advocate, to be an atheist is also a form of faith or belief. It readily presupposes the thing – presence or absence of a transcendental entity – whose existence as human invention should be understood in modern cognitive science terms.

Our suggestion that faith should be qualified in terms of evidence about what goes on between people runs counter to most interpretations of religious faith and theological arguments. Most believers indeed qualify religious faith in terms derived from the most outspoken proponent we presented in this chapter: Søren Kierkegaard. That is to say, they defend some form of belief that takes Tertullian's adage "Credo quia absurdum" as its point of departure. In this case, absence of evidence is heralded as the litmus test of the true believer. It is our choice to approach such a position in terms of its cognitive and behavioral underpinnings, and to leave the theological argumentation aside. We hold the degree of evidence as crucial – psychologically speaking – in maintaining interpersonal relations and in complying with normative demands, as we argued in Part One. We repeat: Belief is indispensable for the construction and maintenance of a human order. Religious belief is – again psychologically speaking – a form of belief in which evidence is sidetracked. In that sense it is rather special. The idea was suggested to us by Jaap van Heerden in an extensive personal commentary on the original Dutch edition of this book, *Cultuur & Lichaam: Een cultuurpsychologisch perspectief op patronen in gedrag* [Culture and the Body: A Cultural Psychological Perspective on Patterns in Behavior] (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2007).

The functional analysis of the outward form of religion by Chris Bayly in *The Birth of the Modern World 1780–1914* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004) has been indispensable in tracking down the moralistic constructions of religious leaders and the practices of their followers. We also used Jared Diamond's reconstruction of the legitimizing function of religion in sedentary communities in his book *Guns, Germs, and Steel: The Fates of Human Societies* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1997).

The list of functions we provide is based on literature the authors have read over many years, and cannot easily be traced to a few distinct sources. Søren Kierkegaard's *Concluding Unscientific Postscript to Philosophical Fragments* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, [1846]1992) is probably the most influential work, expressing the thought that believing in a personal god is quite different from believing in "something"; that is, something higher or cosmic. It sensitizes us to the unique nature

of religious belief or faith, in which surrender to a personal supervisor of transcendental nature of one's own life is the preeminent qualifying factor. Faith in such an entity can never be corrected in a rational way. It therefore is the most extreme form in a range of beliefs, all based on the human cognitive capacity to believe, without which our complex human relations would be impossible. This range runs from the global fiduciary aspects of human exchange at the institutional level, like belief in money or marriage arrangements, to the way we generally rely on the effective operation of our everyday electronic equipment. It all involves faith of some sort. Precisely such taxonomic or defining ordering is the outcome of viable psychological argumentation about faith as the exclusive cognitive and affective capability of the human species.

The autobiographical work of Klaus Mann, *The Turning Point* (London: Serpent's Tail, [1942]1987) has convinced us of how important it is to keep the mysteriousness of human life intact. The passage we quoted is the authors' translation of the Dutch version of Mann's book. Émile Durkheim's *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (New York: Free Press, 1995) made clear how important the intrinsic social group is for all kinds of belief or faith, including religious faith. Jared Diamond's *Guns, Germs, and Steel* once more provides a convincing argument for the close connection between religious belief on the one hand and social order on the other. Combining this book with Bayly's rendering of world religions as a continuously homogenizing exercise of power, as well as with Francis Fukuyama's *The Origins of Political Order* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2011), in which he defends religion as the preeminent source of the Rule of Law, we cannot but argue that religion is foremost a male-dominated control system. This feature is so evident that we find it surprising that it is not systematically used in the behavioral sciences as a convincing scientific argument in favor of the exclusively man-made character of religion. We did not come across a book that did so.

Job Cohen's quote is derived from his New Year address on January 1, 2002. The thesis of this speech is elaborated in "Binden" [Binding], in B.C. Labruschagne (ed.), *Religie als bron van sociale cohesie in de democratische rechtsstaat?* [Religion as a source of social cohesion in the democratic constitutional state] (Nijmegen: Ars Aequi Libri, 2004).

The use of religious denominations as a source of identity follows directly from religion as an assembly of differentiating doctrines, rituals, and practices that give people a firm base in life. The idea that these four elements also need to be seen from the perspective of a man-made dynamic by means of which religious leaders keep a firm grip on the believers, is



entirely ours. Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno's *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (New York: Herder and Herder, [1947]1972) holds that religion is a form of proto-scientific ordering that is eventually rendered obsolete by scientific progress, notwithstanding the fact that scholars like Dinesh D'Souza in *What's So Great About Christianity* (Washington, DC: Regnery Publishing, 2007) argue the opposite. Indeed, for a long time in history theology was the only so-called "science," in which concise arguments in favor of God's existence paved the way for scientific reasoning.

The argument that Marxist-inspired criticisms of religion virtually disappeared, or at least were diluted after the fall of the Berlin Wall, is our own. Sigmund Freud's criticism of religion can be found in *The Future of an Illusion* (New York: W.W. Norton, [1927]1975). Its validity is much contested, due to the bad scientific reputation of psychoanalysis. Marx's criticism of religion – from which comes the famous quote about religion being the opium of the people – can be found in "Zur Kritik der Hegelschen Rechtsphilosophie" (*Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher* [Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right], 1844, 71–85).

Our ideas about utopia are heavily influenced by Hans Achterhuis, *De erfenis van de utopie* [The legacy of utopia] (Amsterdam: Ambo, 1998). His book *De utopie van de vrije markt* [The utopia of the free market] (Rotterdam: Lemniscaat, 2010) analyses the ideology of the free market as propagated by Ayn Rand and her followers. It made us aware of the fact that utopias are current and not something of the past.

The fact that religious identity is revitalized in resilient and often even militant forms of belonging needs no additional arguments. There are radical factions in all religions of the world that provide people who are lost in the turbulence of the time with something to hold on to. That religion takes morality hostage is an idea of our own, for which we found no source. Yet, it is not difficult to see that from the moment the moderate variant of Enlightenment became dominant, as Jonathan Israel has argued (see Chapter 9), no widely endorsed alternative for religion as a source of morals has been devised, not even in humanism. At least we did not find any systematic attempt at such an enterprise. In our view it is indeed the task of the behavioral sciences to provide such a new anchoring of morals, as we argue in Part Three.

The involvement of the three world religions in declaring the male sex indispensable for social order, at the expense of an equally visible role for the female sex, is a suggestion we infer from the perennial struggle against female priesthood in the modern Church. Again, we did not come across any systematic attempt to explain why this is the case. Yet, it is a striking feature of all religious organizations with global impact. We present this



feature as the prime source of religion's persistence. It is a feature in much need of qualification in scientific terms. Our presentation of a biological explanation in terms of Michael Shermer's "belief engines" – see *The Believing Brain* (New York: Times Books/Henry Holt, 2011) – combined with an emphasis on the tuning of religious feelings in the intrinsic social group, is just one step toward such a qualification of religious faith. In our view, religion is a product of coordinated behavior in intrinsic social groups. If it is used in any manner, it is used by humans and not by God or gods.

## Chapter 9 A Psychology of Globalization

History books that criticize provincialism inspired us to describe globalization in terms of behavior taking forms that are worldwide. Since 1500, there has been constant exchange between the Western world and other empires and nations that profited from the favorable preconditions of the Eurasian landmass, as Jared Diamond has argued (see above under Chapter 8). It has stimulated the inventiveness and creativity ultimately laid down in lifestyles with worldwide appeal. These styles resulted from this continuous exchange. It is these styles that provided us with a new focus in describing globalization's history and impact. In that context we borrow a notion from Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Post-colonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000) and we give it a new twist: The West should realize its own provincialism in combination with its strength. What Chakrabarty has done for Europe – that is to say, gently showing and criticizing Europe's boasting attitude of having been the source and measure of all things – should be repeated for the West in its entirety. We are not advocating a simple cultural relativism since we are well aware of the fact that the North Atlantic region has cultivated a variety of lifestyles that are sought after and imitated by millions of others. That is the strength we tried to highlight in this chapter and we think that is new.

Pankaj Ghemawat's *World 3.0: Global Prosperity and How to Achieve It* (Boston, MA: Harvard Business Review Press, 2011) had a sobering influence on us in that economic globalization looks rather restricted. Yet Ghemawat fails to really explore behavioral globalization. To our surprise a behavioral focus is generally neglected in globalization literature. Farhadi's 2011 movie *A Separation* makes clear how strange this situation is.

A clear distinction between modernization and Westernization is suggested by the de-provincializing historical literature that now floods the

market, compared to when we worked on the Dutch original of this book. There are now many books that set the West against the rest of the world. We were influenced by: Kishore Mahbubani, *The New Asian Hemisphere: The Irresistible Shift of Global Power to the East* (New York: Public Affairs, 2008); Chris Bayly, *The Birth of the Modern World 1780–1914* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004); Niall Ferguson, *Civilization: The West and the Rest* (London: Allen Lane, 2011); Ian Morris, *Why the West Rules – for Now: The Patterns of History and What They Reveal About the Future* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2010); and Fareed Zakaria, *The Post-American World* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2008).

Many of the things mentioned in Jared Diamond's book have been amplified in Charles Mann, *1493: Uncovering the New World Columbus Created* (New York: Knopf, 2011). We used it for more details about global exchange. The recent confirmation of the demographic collapse in post-Columbian America can be found in Brendan O'Fallon and Lars Fehren-Schmitz, "Native Americans experienced a strong population bottleneck coincident with European contact" (*Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 108(51), 2011, 20444–20448).

The differences in state formation, Rule of Law, and accountability are from Francis Fukuyama, *The Origins of Political Order: From Prehuman Times to the French Revolution* (London: Profile Books, 2011). Additional arguments pertaining to the legal system of Islam are from Hans Küng, *Islam: Past, Present, and Future* (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2007) from which the idea is taken that the religious divisions within Islam did not put the core religious demands at risk – unlike the religious divisions in the Christian West.

*Agape* as a core value in human bonding with huge consequences for economic order was taken from the literature on the European Marriage Model, as presented in the bibliography of Chapter 4 above.

Our thinking about tolerance, religious wars, the development of libertinism, and the opposition to theocracy was much influenced by Benjamin Kaplan. His books *Divided by Faith: Religious Conflict and the Practice of Toleration* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007) and *Calvinists and Libertines: Confession and Community in Utrecht 1578–1620* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995) have been very helpful in articulating the role of religion in the booming economical and technological advancements in the West. The institutional resemblance of world religions again comes from Bayly's 2004 book mentioned above.

The emphasis on the secular nature of the Western civilizing offensive, despite the prevalence of religion in the West, is our own. The bringing together of attractive features like absence of conversion, inclusion, and the possibility to shape one's own experiences is ours as well. We like to

present it as a way out of the modernization-Westernization dilemma, but we also offer this idea to be refined by others into a better one in order to improve the positive agenda we want to present.

The idea that the Radical Enlightenment is still an unfinished program is inspired by the three volumes of Jonathan Israel: *Radical Enlightenment: Philosophy and the Making of Modernity 1650–1750* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002); *Enlightenment Contested: Philosophy, Modernity, and the Emancipation of Man 1670–1752* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006); and *Democratic Enlightenment: Philosophy, Revolution, and Human Rights 1750–1790* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011). By combining his perspective with the message in Stephen Toulmin's *Cosmopolis: The Hidden Agenda of Modernity* (New York: Free Press, 1990), as well as with Wim Klever's reading of Spinoza in the annotated volumes *Verhandeling over de verbetering van het verstand* [*Tractatus de intellectus emendatione*] [Treaty on the Improvement of Reason] (Amsterdam: Ambo, 1986) and *Ethicom: Spinoza's Ethica vertolkt in tekst en commentaar* [Ethicom: Spinoza's *Ethica* rendered in text and commentary] (Delft: Eburon, 1996), we arrived at the formulation of our radical behavioral science perspective. This is new, we think, and as far as we can see it is a corollary of combining the lines of thinking in these books. We consider Spinoza to be a behavioral scientist *avant la lettre*, so to speak, who encourages us to apply thinking in terms of a scientific approach to normativity to all human behavior, feeling, and reasoning.

Our emphasis on practical science is in line with considering science as a general human enterprise, as argued by Frits Staal in "Het begrip wetenschap in Europa en Azië" [The notion of science in Europe and Asia] in his *Drie bergen en zeven rivieren* [Three mountains and seven rivers] (Amsterdam: Meulenhoff, 2004). Rens Bod defends a similar argument in *A New History of the Humanities: The Search for Principles and Patterns from Antiquity to the Present* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013). Science proliferated in the West in a unique way, due to the revolutionizing of scientific practice in terms of mathematical precision and theoretical audacity in exploring nature's enigmas. Floris Cohen's *How Modern Science Came into the World: Four Civilizations, One 17th-Century Breakthrough* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2011) describes this revolutionary impact on the natural sciences in great detail, though the social and behavioral sciences fall outside the scope of this book. To correct this a little, we have presented Spinoza in the way he is read by Wim Klever, as the instigator of the idea of applying the natural science approach as the single scientific approach to all human affairs, with nothing exempted. This reading of Spinoza can be found in Klever's editions mentioned above. It advocates in a radical way a full-fledged science

that is practiced by a democratically controlled community of scholars, which aims at an understanding of human nature, the animal world, and the surrounding physical realm. This science is single and undivided, using a broad variety of methods. Its findings pertain to everyone, without exception, and the scientific practice it presupposes implies no power relations. Convincing scientific arguments and empirical evidence are all that count.

## Chapter 10 Epilogue

The example of increasing people's hygienic routines on big animal farms instead of administering even more antibiotics to animals, in order to prevent disease, comes from a Dutch radio interview by Trudy van Rijswijk (Radio 1, June 26, 2012). Changing the workers' routines enabled a sharp decrease in the amount of antibiotics that have to be used. Interestingly, the farmer interviewed argued that the successful implementation of this program depended most on cooperation from other farmers, which underscores once more the importance of socially tuned practices and feelings. On the same date, a similar item was on Dutch television 20.00 news (NOS Journaal), where it was argued that increased worker hygiene could decrease the use of antibiotics by 60 percent. That many people worldwide have unhealthy eating and drinking habits needs no further discussion. The example of executives who have become completely detached from their primary clients is taken from an interview with Maria Goos by Herien Wensink ("De bankwereld als fascistoïde sekte op zwarte schoenen" [The world of the banks as a fascist sect in black shoes], *NRC Handelsblad*, November 5, 2011). Goos is the director of the play that we mention in the main text. The ongoing rat race between some professional athletes and their doctors, and the anti-doping authorities is in the news during every major international sports event.

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