

in: *Theory Culture & Society* 15/1 (1998): 131-150

## **How Strange to Ourselves are our Feelings of Superiority and Inferiority?**

**Notes on *Fremde und Zivilisierung* by Hans-Peter Waldhoff.**

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### **Introduction: Examples of Dealing with Strangers and 'Strangeness'**

Towards the end of 1995, the authorities in Vietnam started a national campaign against what was called 'negative foreign influences.' 'American cultural imperialism' in particular, was considered to be a serious threat to 'traditional morals.' In the 1920s and 1930s, many European authorities used to speak a similar language. A Dutch government committee, for instance, warned against the 'demoralizing Americanization of Europe.' The poison was localized predominantly in the lower abdomen of America: under the influence of 'negroes and popular negro music, in our country too the most primitive feelings could gain the upper hand':

In a country with a disconnected mass like the Americans, bonding has to resort to the sphere of instincts, and this determines the essence of American culture. That negroes set rhythm and tone in dance and music is no coincidence, because as far as their instinctual life is concerned, negroes have maximum vital force at their disposal ... [this music] is pre-eminently suitable for bringing about the flush that makes life easy for those whose way of life prevents them developing a deeper conception of life. (*Rapport*, 1931: 12)

Whereas authorities - recently in Vietnam, earlier in the Netherlands - perceived 'instinctual life' as a threat, many others had a contrary view and saw it as vital and attractive. 'Negroes', for example, were in demand as musicians because of their 'natural feeling for rhythm,' that is, as 'negroes.' Announcements like 'negro duo' or 'negro orchestra' on posters, names of jazz bands like 'The Black Devils' and of jazz cafés like 'Negro Palace Mephisto' clearly attracted many people. Precisely for that reason the authorities observed a social virus threatening 'our' girls and morals. In 1936, a chief inspector in Amsterdam wrote in a report:

The performance of the band leader in particular make the audience think it was at the zoo. While one might still enjoy the pranks of the apes in that paradise of animals, in The Negro Kit Cat Club, however, watching the act of these 'apes' is disgusting.

Coloured foreigners are a danger for white girls. Quite a few young girls have been sexually debauched by such people and children born from such relationships usually have to be maintained at the expense of the poor law. (quoted in Openneer, 1995: 27)

In the war (early 1942), his successor wrote:

I judge the performance of these Surinamese as musicians in public places to be a great moral danger for the female youth of the Netherlands. In actual practice it has been sufficiently proven that these Surinamese have a fatal influence on young females, who for one part are attracted by the black skin of these folks and for another part are carried along by their barbaric music. In perfect agreement with the Mayor of Amsterdam, I have therefore summoned the owners of the following establishments to dismiss their Surinamese musicians. (quoted in Openneer, 1995: 33)

The German sociologist Hans-Peter Waldhoff opens his book *Fremde und Zivilisierung* (*Strangers and Civilization*) (1995) with a similar example of how people relate to 'strangers,' namely by discussing the relationship between Germans and 'gypsies.' Just like 'negroes' in the Netherlands, 'gypsies' in Nazi-Germany on the one hand exerted a certain attraction because of what counted as their freedom or independence and their animalic or instinctive naturalness ('in full radiance and colourful wildness'), while on the other hand, they caused alarm, especially to the authorities (and to the psychic functions representing the authorities within individuals' psychic make-up), because of exactly the same attributed characteristics and qualities. Precisely because 'these creatures still live in complete dependence on nature and fate ... driven by their originally inherited instincts,' Oberarzt Robert Ritter, leader of the 'rassenhygienische und völkerbiologische Forschungsstelle der Reichsgesundheitsamtes', demanded 'an elimination of primitives, who are determined by their predisposition.' Hans-Peter Waldhoff sighs: 'This is how close romanticization and extermination of a group can get' (Waldhoff, 1995: 73). Indeed, in many cases this combination of attraction *and* repugnance in people betrays their lack of confidence and their fear of losing self-control if they admitted, even to themselves, being tempted by what they see as 'dangerous behaviour': they are afraid to set the fox - in themselves - to watch the geese, afraid opportunity will make them a thief. Their displays of superiority in controlling these temptations actually demonstrate how small and rudimentary the difference in emotion management is (Wouters, 1992: 242).

These examples all illustrate the important thesis of Waldhoff's *Fremde und Zivilisierung* that patterns (produced in social processes) of relating to 'strangers' *mirror*

patterns (produced in psychic processes) of relating to one's own 'strangeness' -, that is, to the part of oneself that has become 'unconscious'. He presents this mirror to Germans by focusing on the relationship between Turks and Germans in Germany.<sup>1</sup> In variation upon Myrdal's famous statement about America's racial problem being a problem of its white people, Waldhoff points out that Germans in their relationship with Turks in Germany are confronted with a reflection of their capacity to endure and work through their own feelings of strangeness - those desires and fears that in processes of repression, denial and other forms of defence have become strange to the self. This capacity is taken as an important criterion of the type and level of civilization. Following Elias, Waldhoff connects the rise of psychic defence and/or 'experiences of strangeness' to phases in processes of state formation. Comparing Turkey and Germany, differences and changes in the monopolization of the use of violence and the power to raise taxes are connected to civilizing processes -, that is, to the development of dominant patterns of self-control, developments in the codes of behaviour, feeling, timing and orientation. Before discussing these connections in greater detail, a small excursion into some directly relevant social and psychic processes seems necessary.

### **What Happened to 'Dangerous' Emotions?**

In the psychic make-up of individuals, the 'dangerous' emotions and impulses to use physical and/or sexual violence are closely connected to feelings of superiority and inferiority and also to feelings of shame. Norbert Elias hinted at these interconnections by describing shame as

a form of displeasure or fear which arises characteristically on those occasions when a person who fears lapsing into inferiority can avert this danger neither by direct physical means nor by any other form of attack. This defencelessness against the superiority of others... results from the fact that the people whose superiority one fears are in accord with one's super-ego, with the agency of self-constraint implanted in the individual by others on whom he was dependent, who possessed power and superiority over him... It is a conflict within his personality; he himself recognizes himself as inferior. He fears the loss of the love or respect of others, to which he attaches or has attached value.

(Elias, 1994: 492)

Apparently, both the chances of physical attack and those of (further) conscience formation depend upon the network of interdependencies, as perceived in terms of inferiority and superiority. From a long-term perspective, both impulses to physical attack and fears of such

attack by others have to a large extent been replaced by social fears of shame and repugnance or embarrassment: a civilizing process in increasingly interdependent and internally pacified societies (Elias, 1994). In these processes, not only transgressions such as outbursts of physical - and sexual - violence, but also other ways of inflicting humiliation have increasingly come to be seen as intolerable displays of arrogance or self-aggrandizement, and sanctioned accordingly with stronger individual shame and collective repugnance and moral indignation. Because they would provoke such compelling shame and sanctioning, these 'dangerous' emotions and impulses came to be increasingly avoided, repressed and denied. Ideally, that is, according to the code of behaviour and feeling which developed, they should neither appear on the social scene nor in the individual mind. Even admitting to experience of these 'dangerous' emotions and impulses would provoke compelling shame and anxiety. Everything that came to be defined as 'dangerous' or 'unacceptable' was to be nipped in the bud, particularly in children, according to the conviction that all people would almost automatically 'fall onto temptation' if 'unacceptable' emotions and impulses were allowed into consciousness. This old conviction expresses a fear that is typical of the long-term process of formalization, characterized by rather authoritarian relationships and social controls as well as a relatively authoritative conscience. The long-term trend of formalization probably reached its peak in the 'Victorian Era', together with the 'stiff upper lip', a metaphor indicating a kind of ritualistic self-control which is heavily based upon an authoritative conscience or superego, functioning more or less automatically as a 'second nature'. In the twentieth century the process of informalization has become dominant. However, only in the second half of this century, did the dominant mode of emotion management apparently reach a strength and scope that enabled most people to admit to themselves and to others to have these 'dangerous' violent and/or sexual emotions and impulses, without provoking shame, particularly the shame-fear of losing control and having to give in to them. For example, whereas before it was considered to be dangerous to 'covet thy neighbour's wife', today, to covet is no longer perceived as dangerous, nor is acting upon this longing perceived as such, if only the principle of mutual consent is respected. Such a type of self-regulation can only become dominant in societies with a relatively high degree of interdependency; only in such societies can the level of mutual trust or mutually expected self-restraints rise to the extent that the dangers of becoming overwhelmed by these 'dangerous' emotions are sufficiently controlled. Decreasing power inequalities and the integration of former outsider groups into welfare states (Swaan, 1988) have been the necessary conditions

for the principle of mutual consent to spread and to allow for this rise in the level of mutual trust. In other words, further integration of lower classes within the social structure has allowed, and soon demanded, further integration of 'lower' or 'animalic' impulses and emotions within personality structures. This is characteristic of the process of informalization (Wouters, 1986). Only in such a phase in the civilizing of emotions do attempts at loosening restraints stand a chance of becoming successful. Otherwise, most 'decontrolling of emotional controls', particularly with regard to provoking and challenging sexual and violent emotions, would be regarded as insufficiently 'controlled' and thus as too threatening. Until the 1950s and 1960s, emotions in general were predominantly seen as a source of transgression and misbehaviour. Since then, emancipation and integration processes in several Western countries have apparently reached a level which has allowed emotions to gain acceptance as important guides for behaviour and knowledge (see Wouters, 1992).

This perception of long-term trends of formalization and informalization as phases in civilizing processes helps to illuminate a common characteristic of Dutch authorities in the inter-war years and the Vietnamese authorities in the 1990s: both perceived a threat to 'traditional morals' in the life style of people who belong to subordinate classes, as well as in the life style of people belonging to more powerful states ('a demoralizing Americanization'). Both took disciplinary measures to prevent the population from becoming 'estranged' from tradition and from concluding a treacherous treaty/union with the 'strangers' from abroad. In this respect, these authorities were in a similar phase: their own 'strangeness', defended by the inner fears of their rather authoritative conscience, was mirrored not only in the lifestyle of people who seemed less confined by an 'iron cage', but also in the more informalized lifestyle of people with a more flexible and ego-dominated self-regulation. Usually, the latter threat is conceptualized in terms of morals and branded as decadence. The 1995 example of the Vietnamese authorities trying to defend 'traditional morals' shows that, in twentieth-century processes of informalization, this type of 'second-nature' defence against the dangers and problems of a more reflexive and flexible kind of self-regulation has expanded from the West to the global level. Whereas in former centuries the threat as well as the vitality and attractiveness of 'instinctual life' or 'unrefined spontaneity' was only perceived and located in lower classes and outsiders like 'Negroes' or 'gypsies', in the twentieth century both this threat and this attraction are also perceived and located in globally established groups of 'strangers'.

### **'Strangers' and 'Strangeness' in Phases in the Civilizing of Emotions**

In his exposition of the connections between the civilizing of emotions and reactions to experiences of 'strangeness', Waldhoff leans heavily on the distinction between a formalizing or, as he prefers to term it, a disciplinary phase and an informalizing phase in civilizing processes. In the disciplinary phase, social constraints increasingly exert pressure towards rejecting everything that seems wild, violent, dirty, indecent or lecherous, in order better to control or cope with these impulses and urges. In this phase, the austere and inexorable repression of urges and affects can only be accomplished, so it seems, by effacing them both socially and individually from consciousness and by warding off everything that is reminiscent of them with a rigour similar to that which was demanded in the original process of suppression. This process, in which all kinds of emotions and behaviour are put behind the scenes of social life, has a socio-psychical counterpart in the societal production of unconsciousness (and *homo clausus* feelings). As these urges, impulses and emotions are repressed and sink into the unconscious, an emotional 'estrangement' is created. 'Thus,' Waldhoff writes, 'the strange and the unconscious have come to appear as belonging to the same incomprehensible rebus of an intangible *nature*' (p.82). This fits into a rigid way of relating to strangers and to one's own feelings of strangeness, which is characteristic of the long-term formalizing phase in civilizing processes. Particularly in this phase, there is a strong tendency to discharge the problems inherent in this process by projecting them onto 'strangers' and onto weaker social groups, who might otherwise function as a reminder of one's own weaknesses. This largely explains why the social dividing lines keeping weaker classes and other 'strangers' at bay are usually as rigid as the psychic dividing lines keeping one's own weakness and 'strangeness' at bay. In the more extreme moments of a disciplinary phase, primary impulses and emotions can come to be denied and placed outside one's personality with such forced rigour that members of socially weaker classes may even be considered as less than human (see Elias and Scotson, 1994: xxvii). All kinds of humiliation and annihilation have occurred on the basis of such an anxiety-ridden orientation and pattern of emotion regulation; the examples mentioned at the start of this essay - to leave 'negroes' without means of support and to kill 'gypsies' - can easily be augmented. In nineteenth-century Europe, for instance, it was completely taken for granted by the bourgeoisie, including the petit bourgeoisie, that the lower classes were to be avoided as much as possible, not only because 'the Great Unwashed' counted as coarse and rude, but also as dirty and smelly. In this

way, social and psychic fears - of loss of status and loss of self-control respectively - were moulded in physical terms and transformed into physical repulsion.<sup>2</sup> Thus, the lower classes were socially excluded as 'strangers', just as strange feelings (meaning 'not mine') were excluded from consciousness.

This psychic defence also concerned the necessity of having to live together with strangers and strange groups in greater interdependence and as such it also expressed resistance to the expanding and differentiating interdependency networks, for these changes coincide with loss of privileges as well as with an intensification of competition, social pressures and individual 'stress'. For these reasons, Waldhoff observes, 'of all people, strangers are the most suitable people to function as the "dirty" substitutes for one's own urges and affects that are experienced as dirty, for repressed images and for feelings of inferiority against which one needs protection' (p.270/1). Therefore, in this disciplinary phase in civilizing processes, the established group's feeling of being threatened by 'strangers' and other outsiders remains explosive: if outsiders maintain a more dissolute lifestyle, they are experienced as a threat to the more or less automatically functioning self-restraints, the 'Superego' of the established. Moreover, the more the lifestyle of these outsiders becomes 'impeccable', the more do they threaten the we-ideal and self-image of the established.

When, in expanding networks of interdependency, the social and psychic dividing lines are opening up and social groups as well as psychic functions are becoming integrated, the informalizing phase in civilizing processes breaks through. This phase is characterised by an emancipation of emotions and impulses which had hitherto been repressed, resulting in a more 'reflexive civilizing' of self-regulation. The less inexorable and less militaristic defence also goes for people embodying 'strange' standards of self-regulation; some people, formerly excluded, come to be recognized again as fellow human beings, just as some impulses and emotions which were denied as being generally human, again come to be acknowledged as such - it is a social as well as a psychical de-hierarchization, opening up, or levelling. In other words, social emancipation and integration demand psychic emancipation and integration, a more strongly ego-dominated self-regulation. This kind of self-regulation implies that drives, impulses and emotions, even those which could provoke physical and sexual violence, are more easily accessible, while their control is less strongly based upon an authoritative conscience, functioning more or less automatically as a 'second nature'.

In analysing the changes from the disciplinary phase to the informalizing phase,

Waldhoff explicitly focuses on the affective process in which constraints by others are transformed into self-constraints, and upon the cognitive process in which an orientation determined by others (*'Fremdorientierung'*) is transformed into 'self-orientation'. Regarding the increasing social constraints towards self-restraints, he points for instance to a shift in the focus of social controls. More traditional social controls focus more strongly on situations rather than on individuals: their honour and dishonour predominantly depend upon the social control of being found or not found in particular situations. These situations can be specified with the help of a limited number of rather simple and basic data like age, sex or gender, phase of life, wealth, position in the home and position of the home in the community. These data provide the keys to a pattern of rather formal and rigid behavioural prescriptions. For instance, an unmarried woman should never be in a situation where she is alone with a man, regardless of their activities and intentions. In modernizing and civilizing processes in which social constraints towards self-restraint expand and intensify, these prescriptions become less rigid, more varied, and are acted upon in more personal and flexible ways, while social controls shift from situations to the activities and motives of individuals, that is, according to the prevailing level of mutually expected self-restraints.

With regard to cognitive processes, 'synthesis formation' is a key concept. In order to envisage connections of larger scope, a wider orientation in the symbolic universe is demanded, and thus, the indiscriminate reproduction of *'Fremdorientierung'* becomes less and less sufficient. In these transformation processes, people 'master' these constraints and orientations, which in psychoanalytical terms can be expressed as a strengthening of 'Superego'- and 'Ego'-functions in relation to 'Id'-functions, and subsequently also a strengthening of 'Ego'-functions in relation to 'Superego'-functions. The same goes for an enlarged capacity for synthesis formation: this demands a stronger discipline to think oneself.

As manners and relationships between social groups become less rigid and hierarchical, the same happens to the relationships between psychic functions, altogether opening up a larger and more differentiated spectrum of alternatives and more flowing and flexible connections between social groups and psychic functions. This in particular is typical of the informalizing process. In the course of this process, to paraphrase and contradict Elias, 'consciousness' becomes *more* permeable by drives, and drives become *more* permeable by 'consciousness'. In informalizing societies, elementary impulses again have an easier access to people's reflections.<sup>3</sup>

## **A Differentiation in the Theory of Civilizing Processes**

In his book, Waldhoff presents a differentiation within the theory of civilizing processes which helps to understand the twentieth-century processes of informalization. It is a differentiation with regard to Elias's concept of *Selbstzwang* or self-constraint. Waldhoff maintains that Elias mainly focuses on 'automatic inner anxieties', 'automatizations of self-control' and 'more or less automatically functioning fears and self-constraints', and thus in most cases refers to 'Superego'-constraints when writing about self-constraints. Moreover, Waldhoff suggests distinguishing between two types of Superego-dominated types of personality; in addition to an authoritarian Superego-dominated personality, he conceptualizes that type of personality which has been so often described by Elias as a *homo clausus* or a *we-less ego* (*wir-loses Ich*), as dominated by a *we-less superego*. As the authoritarian type is not conscious of its own 'strangeness', it can be projected on to 'strangers'. In contrast, the *homo clausus* type no longer allows itself this simple solution. Although already more strongly ego-directed than the authoritarian type, this type of personality suffers especially from ego-weakness in integrating antagonistic psychological functions. Therefore, Waldhoff distinguishes between five types (he calls them 'ideal types') of dominant self-regulation and/or emotion management: (1) dominated by drives and impulses, (2) dominated by constraints from others (*Fremdzwang*), (3) dominated by an authoritarian conscience or 'superego' - an authoritarian personality with a strong inclination or a compulsion toward reduction, repetition, imitation, cleanliness, law and order, (4) dominated by a 'we-less' superego - the *homo-clausus* type, more or less desperately trying to force a breach in the walls around its emotional life. This attempt signals a spurt towards informalization, and as the informalizing phase of civilizing processes gains momentum, more and more people become (5) 'ego'-dominated, developing a type of self-regulation that involves not simply a stronger or larger control of affects, but a different pattern of control, a pattern that involves more flexible, more individually malleable controls which are more easily accessible to emotions. On the basis of these differences in self-regulation, Waldhoff also makes a differentiation in what Elias conceptualized as the balance between *Fremdzwang* (constraints by others) and *Selbstzwang* (self-constraints) and connects this differentiation to the two phases in civilizing processes: in the disciplinary or formalizing phase the central tension is between external constraints and superego-constraints (changing the '*Fremdzwang* - *Überich*' balance in the direction of an authoritarian superego-directed

personality), whereas in the informalizing phase the tension in the balance between superego and ego prevails (changing the 'superego - ego' balance). With regard to most European countries this means that until the end of the nineteenth century, a 'superego'-dominated type of personality was in the making and became dominant. The main tension-balance was between external constraints and superego-restraints. In the twentieth-century informalizing processes, more and more people have developed a type of self-regulation that is more 'ego'-dominated. It is the twentieth-century phase in which the overall emancipation and integration of 'lower' social groups in (Western) society allows for the emancipation and integration of 'lower' impulses and emotions in personality (Wouters, 1995a; 1995b).

### **From 'Second Nature' to 'Third Nature'**

As peoples unthinking - their more or less automatic - acceptance of authorities decreased, the respect and self-respect of all citizens have come to be less directly dependent upon social controls and more directly dependent upon their reflexive and calculating abilities, and therefore upon a particular pattern of self-control in which the 'unthinking acceptance' of the dictates of psychic authority or conscience has also decreased. Thus, there is an emancipation of impulses and emotions, a shift from conscience to consciousness (to use this as a shorthand expression), which means that the 'superego - ego' balance prevails. These changes can be illuminated by introducing the term '*third nature*'. The term 'second nature' refers to a highly automatic functioning of conscience and self-regulation, and thus it refers to the balance between external constraints and superego-restraints. The term 'third nature' is indicative of a balance between this 'second-nature' self-regulation and a more reflexive and flexible one. The latter ideally indicates a personality structure in which ego functions have become dominant to the extent that it has become 'natural' to perceive the pulls and pushes of both first and second nature as well as the dangers and chances, short term and long term, of any particular situation. The term refers to a level of consciousness and calculation in which all types of constraints and possibilities are taken into account. It is a rise to a new level of reflexive civilization, reaching a higher level on 'the spiral staircase of consciousness' (Elias 1991).

Development in this direction can be discerned from the 1950s onward. Since then, 'inner-direction' - as Riesman called these internalized controls of a rather fixed kind - has definitely changed from being an advantage into being a handicap; they became too predictable, too rigid and stiff. The feeling that 'there is a time and place for everything' gained

significance whereas 'always a gentleman or lady' lost importance in social life. Expanding and intensified cooperation and competition have put people under the pressure to calculate and to observe themselves and each other more sharply, while showing flexibility and a greater willingness to compromise. In this process, almost everywhere in the West, once highly elevated ideologies and great ideals - and with them 'great' conflicts and wars - have to a large extent been superseded by more pragmatic and flexible points of departure. This process brought with it a continued relativation of the once rather narrow and blind - that is, more or less automatic - identification with one's own group, one's family, religion, nationality, race, class and sex, for which a more varied and wider circle of identification was substituted. Thus, in recent decades, the traditional submission of the interests of the individual to those of one's group and its honour has significantly diminished. Most people in the West are now expected to have more individual means of defense at their disposal. Social success has come to depend more strongly upon a reflexive and flexible self-regulation, upon the ability to combine firmness and flexibility, directness and tactfulness (see McCall *et al.* 1983; Mastenbroek 1989, 1999). Recently, the importance of a reflexive and flexible self-regulation for social success was pointed out to a large audience by Daniel Goleman's best-selling book on *Emotional Intelligence* (1996).<sup>4</sup>

Not only in the realms of work, love and care, but also in 'having fun' there arose an increased necessity to be more open to all kinds of extreme and 'deeper' impulses and emotions. As early as the 1950s, Martha Wolfenstein observed

Where formerly there was felt to be the danger that, in seeking fun, one might be carried away into the depths of wickedness, today there is a recognizable fear that one may not be able to let go sufficiently, that one may not have enough fun. (Wolfenstein, 1951/1955: 174)<sup>5</sup>

From the 1960s onward, many people participated in social and psychical experiments searching for the limits of self-regulation and the pleasure of sniffing the dangers on the other side of the boundaries. This provocative and experimental attitude, demonstrating a 'quest for excitement' (Elias and Dunning, 1986), is characteristic of a new level of social and psychic integration: before the 1950s social and psychic authorities would have banned it as too subversive and too dangerous. This 'quest for excitement' and risks can also be understood as the direct counterpart of the 'equanimity of the welfare state': the greater personal security and confidence that was generated by increased wealth and the provision of 'social security' by the

state (Stolk and Wouters, 1987). In the relatively long period of peace and rising 'social and personal security', the arrangements of a caring welfare state were increasingly taken for granted, and this 'peace' in material respects functioned as a breeding ground in which much relational and individual unrest took root, including an enhanced 'quest for excitement', tensions and risks.<sup>6</sup> Young people in particular became fascinated by new questions like 'What follows freedom and prosperity?' and 'What lies beyond the boundaries set by conscience and morality?' The latter question is characteristic of the development towards a 'third nature', a more ego-dominated type of personality.

In the 1960s and 1970s, the 'emancipation of emotions' and the shift from a second-nature to a third-nature type of personality also contained an attack on guilt and guilt feelings as expressed in the widely used words 'guilt trip' in exclamations like 'Don't lay that guilt trip on me, man!' This social movement was mirrored in changing opinions about guilt in criminal law and punishment, in a critique upon the guilt-question as a means of orientation (Benthem van den Berg, 1986), and in the 'self psychology' of Kohut (1977). Guilt feelings came to be experienced more strongly as indicative of a conscience-ridden personality make-up and, therefore, as an anxiety to be mastered. They came to be seen as a symbol and a symptom of an authoritative and rather automatic functioning conscience. In comparison, shame feelings refer more directly to other people, to external constraints, and in addition also to the fact that one's conscience is at least partly in agreement with these others. From this perspective it becomes understandable why the shift from a superego-dominated personality in the direction of an ego-dominated personality coincided with a decline in the status of guilt, both as a feeling and as a concept, or, to use this shorthand expression, why it coincided with a shift from guilt to shame.<sup>7</sup>

Over this same period, an important characteristic of informalization and the development of a 'third nature' consisted of a strong decline in social as well as psychic censorship. Until the 1960s and 1970s, many thoughts were generally branded as dangerous out of the prevailing conviction that they would almost automatically lead to dangerous action. Because of this direct, second-nature connection between thoughts and actions, a relatively high degree of social and psychic censorship was common practice. Rigorous and violent censorship in more strict and authoritarian regimes demonstrates to what extent authorities and others believe(d) in the danger of thoughts, imagination or fantasy. In most Western countries, especially since the 1960s, both the fear and awe of fantasy or dissident imagination have

diminished together with the fear and awe of the authorities of state and conscience.<sup>8</sup> These censorships have decreased in the course of the integration of 'lower' social groups within (Western) societies and the subsequent emancipation and integration of 'lower' impulses and emotions in personality. As 'third nature' - this more ego-dominated pattern of self-controls - developed, particularly in the realm of imagination and amusement, there was a significant spread of more and more unconcealed expressions of insubordination, sex and violence.

A harbinger of these changes is George Orwell's essay 'Raffles and Miss Blandish,' in which he compared two types of detective novels. The first is a series of stories, written in the early twentieth century, about a gentleman crook, Raffles, for whom 'certain things are "not done", and the idea of doing them hardly arises' (1944: 66).

Raffles ... has no real moral code, no religion, certainly no social consciousness. All he has is a set of reflexes - the nervous system, as it were, of a gentleman. Give him a sharp tap on this reflex or that (they are called 'sport', 'pal', 'woman', 'king and country' and so forth), and you get a predictable reaction. (1944/1972: 79).

There are 'very few corpses, hardly any blood, no sex crimes, no sadism, no perversions of any kind' (1944/1972: 67). All these are, however, central to the Miss Blandish novel, about an American type of detective, published in 1939. In this book, the pursuit of power is a pervasive motive, and 'if ultimately one sides with the police against the gangsters, it is merely ... because, in fact, the law is a bigger racket than crime' (1944: 71).

In *No Orchids* anything is 'done' so long as it leads to power. All the barriers are down, all the motives are out in the open. ... there are no gentlemen and no taboos.

Emancipation is complete. Freud and Machiavelli have reached the outer suburbs. (1944/1972: 75,79)

Since Orwell wrote his analysis, the emancipation he refers to as being complete has in fact continued. In the 1970s, a fellow writer and trend-watcher described this continuation as the rise of a new kind of pornography: 'pornoviolence':

Violence is the simple, ultimate solution for problems of status competition, just as gambling is the simple, ultimate solution for economic competition. The old pornography was the fantasy of easy sexual delights in a world where sex was kept unavailable. The new pornography is the fantasy of easy triumph in a world where status competition has become so complicated and frustrating. (Wolfe, 1976: 162)

A few more recent examples of 'pornoviolence' are best-sellers like *American Psycho* (by Bret

Easton Ellis), movies like *Natural Born Killers* and *Pulp Fiction*; Nintendo and other expressions of violence and sex in Virtual Reality. From the popularity of this kind of imagination it would follow that the 'pursuit of happiness' has turned into a pursuit of power.

On the whole, this development implies that the fear of being inevitably 'carried away into the depths of wickedness' by indulging in these 'dangerous' imaginations can be faced and controlled. In fact, much of the pleasurable excitement found in reading or seeing these products derives precisely from facing and controlling these dangers.<sup>9</sup> This also means that the dividing lines *and* the increasingly complex and subtle connections between imagination and reality have come to be more sharply perceived.

But there is more to it than that. It is much less well perceived that this imagined pursuit of power also allows for the experiencing of emotions that have become tabooed in actual social life: feelings of superiority and inferiority. Only in the realm of imagination (and to a lesser extent in sports) are these feelings still allowed to come to the surface, that is, in a 'sublimated' way. In mimetic triumphs and defeats, whether in the world of sex or money, the daily pressure of having to repress and conceal these emotions is released. Here, in the realm of imagination and fantasy, the attraction of these kinds of 'strangeness' has become dominant over the repulsion it provokes. This leads to the question how strange these feelings actually are?

### **How Strange Are These Feelings**

The period after the Second World War is characterized by decolonization, emancipation and democratization. It was a period of expanding interdependencies and rising levels of mutual identification, in which ideals of equality and mutual consent spread and gained strength. On this basis, avoidance behaviour came to be less and less rigidly directed at 'strangers', 'lower'-class people and 'lower' emotions, and on the whole, in most Western countries, behavioural and emotional alternatives expanded. There was one important exception: the social codes increasingly came to dictate the avoidance of inferiority and superiority feelings. Thus, there was a further curbing of emotions in relation to the display of arrogance or self-aggrandizement and 'self-humiliation'. These were either banished to the realm of imagination and sports, or put behind social and psychic scenes. Displaying such feelings would increasingly provoke moral indignation and shame, and thus seriously damage one's status and self-esteem.<sup>10</sup> This avoidance could only be accomplished by either keeping it a secret or by

doing it unconsciously and automatically, that is, by turning it into the product of a 'second nature'. In the banning process involved in developing such a 'nature', however, the insight that feelings of superiority and inferiority are inherently provoked by any status competition tended to be banned as well, and the same goes for the insight that part of any encounter or gathering is a 'trial of strength', a power and status competition. Thus, during the same period in which many emotions were allowed to (re)emerge into consciousness and public life, and in which second-nature habits were discovered and loosened up as 'third nature' developed, simultaneously the emotions connected with triumphs and defeats were becoming 'strange' to the self (see Wouters, 1992).

The banning of these emotions from the social and psychic scene may help to explain why discussing differences in the level of civilization between people and groups, as Waldhoff does, easily provokes negative reactions. In the period after the Second World War, only with regard to small individuals - children - has thinking in terms of phases in (individual) civilizing processes remained acceptable, as the accounts of developmental phases by Kohlberg or Piaget may demonstrate. In other contexts, it was (and is) soon, if not immediately, condemned as a demonstration of superiority feelings, as ethnocentrism or racism. These words might suggest that these reactions to distinguishing developmental phases are triggered mainly because of their being reminiscent of the last war, and, perhaps even more important, of the colonial era. There is, however, also an older and deeper level from which these reactions stem: to think and write in terms of phases in social and psychic processes is also reminiscent of the old habit of equating the related differences in power with differences in human value (Elias and Scotson, 1994: xv). Within the spectrum of first nature and second nature, this old habit may even range closer to first nature than to second, for it prevails both in the history of humankind *and* in the history of each living human being. Up to a certain age, children seem to take it for granted that smaller and less powerful children are second rate: *vae victis*, might is right and the mighty are better people. It belongs so to speak to their 'logic of emotions' to identify with stronger and established people, and to de-identify with weaker and subordinate ones. Today, in growing up, most children will to some extent develop a second-nature type of counter-habitus. Throughout all centuries of the long-term formalizing phase, however, among all age groups the assumption prevailed that the socially weaker necessarily also had weaker characters, that second-rate citizens are second-rate people. Although in every emancipation movement this assumption was attacked, it was only after the Second World

War that it lost its dominance. This occurred in a period of accelerated democratisation (including decolonisation) and informalization - a period, moreover, in which many painfully realized that the superiority feelings inherent in this old habitual assumption had been a basis and a motive for the mass killings under Stalin and Hitler as well as for the exploitation, annihilation and humiliation of colonial regimes such as Churchill's (Goudsblom, 1992: 184-5; Lindqvist, 1997). This formed a strong motive for putting a stricter ban on them, in which process they disappeared further into the deeper layers of personality; thus, they were transformed into inner fears, more or less automatically directed by a person's conscience. In the development of this counter-habit, the old habit to equate social power with human value became more or less 'strange' to the self as everything that was reminiscent of it came to be warded off with a rigour similar to that which was demanded in the original process of suppression. In the Netherlands, for example, until the end of the 1980s, it was virtually taboo to discuss openly the problems surrounding the integration of immigrants from Surinam, Turkey and Morocco. The few who did were branded as racists, quite often with good reason. Only in the second half of the 1980s did this taboo come to be gradually ignored by people other than these right-wingers. In 1986, a well-known left-wing journalist published a book subtitled *Ethnic Difference as a Dutch Taboo* (Vuijsje, 1986), and a few years later a leading politician started to address these problems. Subsequently, in the 1990s, it became a political issue. However, up to the present day, to record criminal acts according to ethnic group is 'not done'; it counts as merely stigmatizing. In this kind of attitude and reaction, the inner fears of an authoritative conscience regarding feelings of superiority and inferiority come to the surface.

Up to the present day, this taboo and the interconnected inner fears quite often lead to overheated attacks on perceived racism, ethnocentrism or 'political incorrectness'. In these instances, the rather blind force of such attacks seems to indicate that the struggle against 'we are better, they are inferior people' is not only fought on the social battlefield but also in the psyche, against parts of oneself. The ongoing psychic battle of individuals, in this particular disciplinary phase in the civilizing of their emotions, usually prevents any discussion of their relationships with people of different skin colour, class or sex from going far beyond a multiculturalist banality like 'they are just different, we are not better.' In these instances, discussions in terms of phases in social and psychic civilizing processes will soon become tense and come to an end, or progress into an evaluative dispute about plus and minus points.

Of course, the study of developments and developmental phases is not directed at drawing up and balancing the disadvantages of any lead against the advantages of any backlog (see Goudsblom, 1996). Such an endeavour would greatly confuse analysis with evaluation. However, exactly this kind of confusion quite often results from the workings of a rather authoritarian conscience formation regarding these emotions. It seems typical of a second-nature type of counter-habitus functioning to fight the old habit of equating differences in power, culture and/or emotion management with differences in human value. My point is that in recent decades, this type of conscience formation has been rather the rule than the exception, and that the developmental process in which this counter-habitus became dominant seems to be characteristic of the period since the 1950s.

It was rather early in this period, in 1976, that Tom Wolfe observed that the emancipation of some emotions coincided with a continued banning of others:

We are in an age when people will sooner confess their sexual secrets - much sooner in many cases - than their status secrets, whether in the sense of longings and triumphs or humiliations and defeats. (Wolfe, 1976: 189)

This observation is in keeping with a widening gap in public discourse: as the principle of proceeding by mutual consent gained acceptance, the possibilities of discussing sexual impulses and emotions have grown, making these discussions more open and detached, whereas the possibilities of discussing the impulses and emotions connected with triumphs and defeats have become more narrow, more restricted and evaluative. As power differences decreased, power and status competition intensified, and the sensitivity for social inequality increased, demonstrations of one's own distinctiveness became more indirect, subtle and hidden. Even writing and thinking about feelings of superiority and inferiority - including about their socio- and psychogenesis, particularly the connection between developments in power and status relationships and developments in habitus and civilization -, increasingly came to be experienced negatively and (thus) morally condemned.

In their ultimate expression, feelings of superiority and inferiority lead to violence. To some extent, aggressive impulses did come to be recognized as normal aspects of emotional life and more and more people also took the liberty to vent them in cursing, calling each other all sorts of names, and making allusions to violence in what could be called 'instant enmity'. However, the spread of allusions to sexuality and of 'instant intimacy' seems to be much wider. This is in keeping with the fact that through psychoanalysis and other forms of psychotherapy,

a rich tradition of recalling and interpreting sexual impulses and emotions has come into existence and spilled over to all walks of life. In comparison, there is hardly any tradition of analysing and interpreting emotions and impulses connected with the struggle for power and status, particularly the feelings of inferiority and superiority.

As it is highly improbable that the emotions connected with longings and triumphs, humiliations and defeats will ever disappear from emotional or social life (just about as improbable as the disappearance of sexual impulses and emotions), the extent to which they will lead to annihilation and humiliation will depend on the level of social and individual control over these emotions. I think therefore that it makes sense to specify the task of 'working through feelings of strangeness,' as Waldhoff has called it, and particularly to direct this 'working through' to feelings of inferiority and superiority. In this context it might also help to bring racism, sexism, agism, nationalism, ethnocentrism, etc., under the new conceptual umbrella of '*superiorism*' as this concept brings all these ism's on a higher level of generalization, highlighting their common characteristic: equating power superiority with superiority as a human being.

In the 1980s and 1990s, the level of social and individual control over the feelings of inferiority and superiority has gained importance because in most societies all over the world, the tensions around 'strangers' and this particular 'strangeness' have intensified. This intensification seems to be related to changes in the social and economic climate, exerting pressures towards all kinds of budget cuts. As the collective social rise of whole groups came to an end, collective identification with the social groups that had been rising shifted towards a renewed collective identification with the established. This shift was reinforced in the 1990s by the tensions, conflicts and insecurities associated with the collapse of the Iron Curtain. Accordingly, social protest was no longer mainly directed at the establishment, as was the case in the 1960s and 1970s, but towards anything perceived as threatening the established order, including 'strangers' and 'strangeness'. It is in this social climate that in most rich countries the tensions surrounding immigrants and other 'strangers' have been rising. This might lead to a fear-ridden hardening of feelings of superiority, which would increase the dangers of annihilation and humiliation. On the other hand, if these tensions do not rise to an explosive level, it seems likely that the 'emancipation of emotions' will be continued, coming to include more feelings of superiority and inferiority. In that case, the level of reflexive civilizing of social and psychic authorities will continue to rise also, strengthening the development of a

'third-nature' type of personality. This would imply that feelings of inferiority and superiority will be further admitted into consciousness, while, at the same time, they will come under a stronger, that is, a more comprehensive, more stable and subtle (ego) control.

I thank Jaap Bos and Michael Schröter for valuable comments and Stephen Mennell and Eric Dunning for correcting my English.

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### Endnotes

- 1 Waldhoff shows empirically how current international migrations do not affect just social relations in the more complicated Western societies, but also the relations between economically stronger and weaker states in what Wallerstein has called the Modern World System, and - furthermore - the intra-psychic structures of the people involved. His thesis, that patterns of relating to 'strangers' mirror patterns of relating to one's own 'strangeness', is mostly taken from ethno-psychoanalysis, from people like George Devereux (1967) and Mario Erdheim (1988). Other studies could have been mentioned in this context, for instance, Fritz Kramer (1990), Julia Kristeva (1991), and Michael Shapiro (1995), but Waldhoff's theoretical ambition has taken him elsewhere. Theoretically, Waldhoff aims at integrating Norbert Elias's theory of civilizing processes with ethno-psychoanalysis and critical theory on the 'Authoritarian Personality' by members of the Frankfurt School such as Adorno and Horkheimer.
- 2 '...the real secret of class distinctions in the West ... is summed up in four frightful words... *the lower classes smell*. And here, obviously, you are at an impassable barrier. For no feeling of like or dislike is quite so fundamental as a *physical* feeling. Race-hatred, religious hatred, differences of education, of temperament, of intellect, even differences of moral code, can be got over; but physical repulsion cannot.' (Orwell 1937/1979: 112)
- 3 At the time of writing his book on the civilizing process, Norbert Elias did not perceive the characteristics of informalization, which lead to attributing characteristics of the long-term formalizing phase to the entire civilizing process:
 

Decisive for a person as he appears before us is neither the 'id' alone, nor the 'ego' or 'superego' alone, but always the *relationship* between various sets of psychic functions, partly conflicting and partly co-operating in the way an individual steers himself. It is they, these relationships *within* man between the drives and affects controlled and the built-in controlling agencies, whose structure changes in the course of a civilizing process, in accordance with the changing structure of the relationships *between* individual human beings, in society at large. In the course of this process, to put it briefly and all too simply,

'consciousness' becomes less permeable by drives, and drives become less permeable by 'consciousness'. In simpler societies elementary impulses, however transformed, have an easier access to men's reflections. In the course of a civilizing process the compartmentalization of these self-steering functions, though in no way absolute, becomes more pronounced. (Elias, 1994: 487)

The latter process, however, has been reversed in the long-term informalizing phase of the twentieth century.

4 A comparison of Goleman's book with Dale Carnegie's famous social success book *How to Win Friends and Influence Relations* (1939) would most probably show interesting continuities and changes in the last half century.

5 In 1937, Emily Post added a new paragraph to her well-known American etiquette book (only to take it out again in the 1950 edition). It was called 'When Young Women Are Not Particular' and it contained serious warnings against 'fun morality' and the 'quest for excitement':

Continuous pursuit of thrill and consequent craving for greater and greater excitement gradually produces the same result as that which a drug produces in an addict; or, to change the metaphor, promiscuous crowding and shoving, petting and cuddling have the same cheapening effect as that produced on merchandise which has through constant handling become faded and rumpled, smudged or frayed and thrown out on the bargain counter in a marked-down lot. (Post, 1937: 355)

6 In the 1960s and 1970s the use of drugs was widely advocated as a way to explore and expand the mind, and today this belief is still alive and kicking. The following quotation is taken from a newspaper article on the rise of 'headshops' in the Netherlands:

Users claim the appeal of hallucinogen mushrooms is in its 'power to amplify and intensify feelings'. The general impression is that of a sweeping experience, intended for people who are prepared for as well as capable of being confronted with their deepest inner self. Experienced users describe the confrontation with themselves as a healing one. (Arjen Schreuder, *NRC Handelsblad*, 2 May 1996)

7 This seems to be a reversal of the development from a shame-culture to a guilt-culture, as has been suggested in an extensive body of literature, in which Ruth Benedict's *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword* (1946) is a classical study. In the informalization process of the twentieth century, this development in the long-term formalizing phase seems to be reversed: from a guilt-culture to a shame-culture. It would be absurd, however, to equate the pattern of shame in what has been described as shame-cultures with the pattern of shame in informalized societies. Therefore, the term reversal is misleading. In the informalization spurt of the 1960s and 1970s, many discovered that all kinds of self-constraints were in fact constraints by others, or at least based upon such external constraints (Wouters, 1995c: 53). Obviously, a distinction between two types of shame mechanisms - or *shaming* mechanisms - corresponding to (at least) two types of external constraints (cf. Schröter 1997: 102-104) is needed just as much as a distinction between two types of shame-cultures.

8 After the uniting of Germany, many artists from former East Germany have expressed the feeling that under the new conditions they are met mostly with indifference, whereas they were taken much more seriously under the old regime. A statement like 'Of course, a dictatorship is more colourful than a democracy' (Heiner Müller) expresses a similar nostalgia.

9 The moral discussion about the MTV figures of Beavis and Butt-Head, for instance, demonstrates that some of the demands of self-regulation, characteristic of informalized societies, are demonstrated in a taken-for-granted way by the MTV-watching youngsters.

10 On the other hand, the avoidance of these feelings and of behaviour that would express or betray them also functioned as a necessary condition for all kinds of emancipation and informalization to occur.