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On Friendship, Equality and Introductions: Comparing English and German Regimes of Manners and Emotions

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Abstract

The Germans and the English differ in their experience of friendship. This paper departs from the observation that German manners books in the nineteenth and twentieth century are preoccupied with ‘friendship’ and the use of the personal pronoun, the informal you: Du. The topic ‘friendship’ is virtually absent in English manners books. In English books, until the 1970s, rules for introductions were a major if not the most prominent topic, whereas these rules attracted hardly any attention in the German ones. From an analysis of manners books from the last decade of, this paper compares friendship in Germany with introducing in England. Establishing a 'friendship' as well as 'being properly introduced' are both ritual transitions from a rather distant and hierarchical relationship in the direction of greater 'equality' and intimacy. These different forms are explained by placing them in the context of their national class structures and by connecting them to differences in the functioning of their good society, particularly the regulation of social mobility, as well as to differences in the processes of social emancipation and national integration.

Keywords: Historical and International Comparison of Germany and England: Friendship, Equality, Introductions, Privacy, Good Society, Social Mobility, Informalization, and Regimes of Manners and Emotions

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Introduction

1.1 From the first half of the nineteenth century until the 1980s, rules for introductions were a major if not the most prominent topic in English manners books, whereas these rules attracted hardly any attention in the German ones. In an opposite way, the same goes for friendship: the topic was almost absent in English manners books while it was a central theme in German ones, together with topics such as *duzen* - addressing each other with the informal you: *Du* - and *Brüderschaft trinken* - the ritual drinking that marks the transition from *Sie* to *Du*, and the kind of brotherhood (*Brüderschaft*) that is associated with it. To understand the preoccupation of the English was easy enough, but that of the Germans was much harder. An important step consisted of noticing a similarity in both national preoccupations: establishing a ‘friendship’ as well as ‘being properly introduced’ are both ritual transitions from a rather distant and hierarchical relationship in the direction of greater ‘equality’ and intimacy. Both are specific forms of social and psychic rapprochements. This article presents a sociogenesis of these national preoccupations, mainly by placing them in the context of a wider framework of differences and changes in the functioning of their good societies, particularly the regulation of social mobility. The wider framework also includes differences and changes in national class structure and social mobility as well as in national habitus and in the processes of social and national integration.[1]

1.2 A highly relevant difference between the two countries concerns changes in the relation between the aristocracy and the middle classes. In the nineteenth century, the middle classes of both countries were expanding in wealth and numbers. Whereas the English aristocracy had opened up their high-society life for an upper crust of middle class families, German aristocratic families continued to exclude middle class families from their social life at the various secluded courts scattered over a disunited German territory. These are differences in the organization of social mobility, hierarchy and equality, and this article is an attempt to show how they are directly connected to differences in the social meaning and significance of ‘introductions’ and ‘friendships’.

1.3 The *organization of social mobility and status competition* occurred to a large extent in the circles of social acquaintance among people of families who belong to the centres of power, and who took part in their sociable gatherings, thus forming a ‘good society’. In their participation in ‘good society’ (or a functional equivalent further down the social ladder, or in the country or provinces), they sought the protection and reinforcement of their occupational and political interests. The manners and sensibilities of a good society were decisive criteria for inclusion and exclusion, and thus functioned to regulate social mobility and status competition. At once, the code of a good society had a *modelling* function, for all socially aspiring people directed themselves to these manners as they were decisive in making acquaintances and friends, for winning a desirable spouse, and for gaining influence and recognition. The code of manners and emotion regulation functioned as a model because the proper ways to establish and maintain relations was constructed in these circles, but not in isolation.

1.4 The code that prevailed in good society also reflected the balance of power and dependence between established member groups and outsider groups in the society as a whole. In order to avoid social conflict and maintain their elevated position, the people in the centres of power and good society had increasingly to take the presence of rising groups into account. As part of this, the former had to show more respect for the ideals, sentiments, morals, and manners of the latter. Therefore, as increasing layers of society became emancipated and more socially integrated, the social codes of good society came to represent these layers – they have a *representational function*. Before, rising groups were also represented in the code, but as long as they remained excluded, the manners of good society allowed for representations that range from negative and ambivalent to positive. Among the excluded, this eventually leads to the formation of a good society of their own, which was what had happened in what was to become Germany. There, as aristocratic good society only exceptionally opened up to members of the bourgeois classes, among the excluded, universities had come to function as the good societies of the middle classes. Thus, until

Germany's unification in 1871, two largely separated good societies spread over the German territory in the form of a large variety of courts and universities. In contrast, England had seen the development of one strong good society, called 'high society', with the royal family as its pinnacle, and London as its centre. Accordingly, the English dominant code of manners came to reflect the collective emancipation of the middle classes and their integration into society, including, for some of their members, into good society.

1.5 In contrast to individual social ascent, the ascent of an entire social group involves some form of mixing of the codes and ideals of the groups which have risen with those of the previously superior groups. In the twentieth century, the successive social ascent of larger and larger groups has been reflected in the dominant codes and habitus – being a shorthand expression for the mentality, the whole distinctive emotional make-up of the people who are thus bonded together. The sediments of this mixing process can be found in manners books: the patterns of self-regulation of increasingly wider social groups came to be reflected in the codes of manners. They can be perceived in changes in the ways in which authors of manners books address their readers, how they draw social dividing lines, for example between public and private, formal and informal, and what they have written about social introductions and forms of address.

1.6 As a rule, any regime of manners and emotions symbolizes and reinforces ranking hierarchy and other social dividing lines, while the same rule has it that changes in these regimes reflect changes in social dividing lines and in balances of power. This helps one to understand why in many European countries the nineteenth century witnessed an *aristocratisation* of the bourgeoisie alongside an *embourgeoisement* of nobility, to be partly succeeded and partly supplemented in the twentieth century by an *embourgeoisement* of the working classes and a *proletarianisation* of the bourgeoisie: *informalisation*.

The Formality–Informality Span in England

2.1 Compared with courts, the circles of the new good society were larger, more open, and more competitive, and as they expanded the people in them developed increasingly detailed and formal manners regarding social circulation. Particularly in nineteenth-century England, a highly elaborate and increasingly formalised regime of manners emerged consisting of a complicated system of rules for introductions and for the maintenance of relations in the circle of those who were properly introduced, such as rules regarding invitations, calls, leaving calling cards, 'at homes' (specified times when guests were received), receptions, dinners, and so on. Early in the nineteenth century, claiming the right of privacy was developed first in English good society. By appealing to this right, groups of established people succeeded in maintaining their superior position by keeping others at a distance whilst avoiding social discrimination. In his excellent study of nineteenth-century English etiquette, the historian Michael Curtin shows that 'privacy and precedence were types of deference which were relatively formal and explicit' (1987: 83). Privacy included the right to be asked beforehand whether or not to accept an introduction to an inferior. Any introduction required the previous permission of both parties and its importance was also demonstrated by the rite de passage of shaking hands: 'In Britain, people shake hands on being introduced, and may never do so again' (Bolton 1961: 49).

2.2 Thus it was impossible to enter good society or to move upwards within its many overlapping hierarchical layers without an introduction. In every such layer, the question whether a person or a couple had the proper credentials to be introduced was discussed extensively, for each introduction was to be supported by a wider inner circle: 'The problem of how, when and whom to introduce frequently exercises the mind of the novice in society. He soon discovers that it is as fatal a mistake to effect too few introductions as too many, and that this social responsibility calls for considerable tact and discrimination' (*Etiquette for Gentlemen* 1923: 27).

2.3 Privacy also included to *the right of recognition*. After being introduced, a variety of relations could develop, a minimal one being the *bowing acquaintanceship*, in which the individuals involved acknowledged each others social existence by bowing. It was an open question whether such a relation would develop any further: 'A bowing acquaintance is a difficult and tiresome one to maintain for any length of time, when opportunities do not arise for increasing it' (*Manners and Rule* 1910: 207). To bow, however, was a form of recognition and as such an important social fact: 'A lady should not bow to another who, being a stranger to her, has addressed a few remarks to her at an afternoon party, as the fact of meeting at the house of a mutual friend does not constitute an acquaintanceship, and does not authorise a future bowing acquaintance' (*Manners and Rule* 1910: 207). Advice like this is remarkable for its detailed distinctions, for its authoritative tone, and for its use of the word 'authorise', which clearly suggests the presence of higher authorities in control of it all. It was only in England that introductions had to be acknowledged; it allowed a class of social superiors the possibility of not 'authorising' them. This privilege was perceived as their privacy. The 'right of recognition', as it was called, implied the option not to renew the acquaintanceship at the next meeting. Not being recognised implied being treated as a stranger or being cut, that is, being completely ignored. A typically English advice was that after an introduction that turned out to be 'unwelcome', 'it is wiser to appear oblivious of the presence of the person concerned than to convey the impression that you wish the intimacy to progress' (*Etiquette for Ladies* 1923: 18). Here, the word 'intimacy' is telling. A German or a Dutch author would never have even thought of using a word like this to indicate the consequences of an introduction. In England, however, introductions provided access to intimacy, friendship, and elevated equality.

2.4 Obviously, this regime of manners did not only regulate sociability, but also functioned as a relatively refined system of inclusion and exclusion, as an instrument to screen newcomers seeking entry into social circles, ensuring that the newly introduced would assimilate to the prevailing regime of manners and self-regulation, and to identify and exclude undesirables. Sometimes, this was made quite explicit, as in *Etiquette for Ladies* of 1863: 'Etiquette is the form or law of society enacted and upheld by the more refined classes as a protection and a shield against the intrusion of the vulgar and impertinent' (quoted in Curtin 1987: 130).

2.5 This elaborate, highly formal and hierarchically differentiated system of screening and restricting those one met 'in company' functioned as a necessary condition for the development of 'the requirement that a gentleman treat those he met in company on the basis of equality', and this was, as Curtin observed, 'one of the commonest and most frequently reiterated principles of etiquette' (1987: 121). Quite often this was expressed in what became known as the Golden Rule of manners: do unto others as you would have them do unto you. The system was completed and complemented by the development of an important means of seclusion: the maintenance of 'reserve', that is, the avoidance of exactly the kind of manners and emotion regulation required when one was 'in company'. Some – those who had been 'properly introduced' – were treated with relative intimacy. Others were treated with reserve and thus kept at a social distance. In short, members treated everyone either as an equal or as a stranger.

2.6 These formal codes, and the whole formalised, hierarchical system of introductions, cards, calls, etc. had the double function of keeping all those one rung down the social ladder at bay, while gaining access to those on the next higher rung. This system is typical of a highly secluded good society with an elaborate and strict regime of gatekeeping and rigorous social control. However, this regime had also allowed for a relatively early shift from avoiding people to avoiding certain feelings and certain displays of feeling, producing that highly demanding English blend of easy-going sociability and reserve. According to Michael Curtin, the attainment of a formalistic control over demeanour was not the salient issue of nineteenth-century good manners, 'but rather a perfected and extended control which realised all the old objectives but with effortless nonchalance. The formalities of manners were by and large readily mastered, but the easy, self-confident, and unself-conscious style turned informality itself into a difficult art' (Curtin 1987: 18). Indeed, sociability as an art depends upon the smoothly controlled decontrolling of emotional controls.

2.7 The whole system also functioned to regulate status competition, to diminish status dangers and fears, and to avoid explicit expression of superiority and inferiority. A significant symptom of this function is the fact that after the 1860's, English manners books no longer contained open references to class. From reading these books, one often gets the impression that, except for servants and an occasional parvenu, all readers belonged to the same class – good society – and all were expected to participate in the 'Great Events' of 'the Season'. Within good society, differences in rank were extremely important, of course, but references to their existence had become a delicate matter. The same goes for references to those outside good society. Even at a time when many 'new people' with 'new money' were entering good society, as was happening around 1900, this style of writing remained dominant.

2.8 It seems likely that the scarcity and delicacy of references to class differences in English manners books is also related to the development of a rather intense feeling of community among the English. During many centuries of relative freedom from external threats, England had become a highly urbanised, unified, and homogeneous country, with a high degree of national integration and London as the great centre of a national culture (Elias 1960, 1962; Davidoff 1973: 16-17). The feeling of community is also demonstrated in the continued social integration of new groups into political centres of power and their good society. At an early stage, the latter, 'High Society' as the English called it, was characterized by the ideal of being a gentleman. This ideal demonstrates the way in which the English aristocracy had entered into agreement with the rising middle classes, for a gentleman personified both middle-class and aristocratic ideals and manners: egalitarian manners in a strongly class-segregated society, consisting of layers of equals. This continuity in being a society with a strong class segregation as well as a high level of social integration and a strong unifying centre, in combination with the possibility of treating everyone alike, either on the basis of equality or as a stranger, allowed and obliged the authors of manners books to keep silent about problems connected with the social mingling of different classes, whereas these issues were openly and frequently discussed in manners books from other countries.

2.9 An unobtrusive insight into the significance of the elaborate and rather rigid system of manners of the English can be derived from the following warning against the 'visiting card trick', published in a 1906 English magazine:

> To bring this trick to a successful issue the beggar must be a man of respectable appearance and some address, for it is essential that he should gain access to your drawing room. ... If he is fortunate enough to be admitted to the drawing room, he asks, before going, if you will oblige him with a glass of water. Should you leave him ... he takes the opportunity to pocket any visiting cards he may see lying about. Presently one of the cards comes back to you. It is presented by another caller, and on the back you read: 'Bearer is a thoroughly deserving man. He is on his way to (some distant town) to obtain work. I have given him ten shillings. Can you help?' ... Some of the other stolen cards will be similarly presented to other friends of the people whose names they bear. Thus, the vicar's card will be presented to one of his churchwardens, the town councillor's to one of his colleagues on the council, and so on. Visiting cards are a recognised article of commerce in some of the common lodging houses, where they are sold at prices ranging up to five shillings according to the supposed value of the card as a bait. (Quoted in Porter 1972: 24-5)

2.10 This confidence trick demonstrates the importance of visiting cards and, at the same time, the high degree of seclusion and integration, the strength of the sense of belonging and protectedness that good society provided. Each layer within good society largely consisted of networks of people that are perceived as *friends* - the stolen cards were presented to 'friends of the people whose names they bear': without this context, a con game like this could not have been successful. Only within the protective environment of each other's 'good company' could tact and consideration be developed more fully. From appreciating how directly introductions and social recognition in England were connected to friendship and equality brings an additional layer of meaning to George Orwell's 'All animals are equal, some are more equal than others.'

2.11 The certainty of being more or less equals 'in company' may also explain why many English people, to this day, tend to behave in a rather easy and informal way in formal situations, whereas on the other hand, in informal situations where this certainty is lacking, they tend to cling to a relatively greater formality. Outside their protected circles, they may traditionally cling to an attitude of reserve towards strangers. To put it in theoretical terms, the English adhere to a code of manners and emotion regulation characterised by a relatively small formality?informality span: a relatively small difference of behaviour in formal and in informal situations and relations or, more precisely, a relatively small difference between behaviour in contacts with people of socially higher and lower standing on the one hand, and behaviour with people of relatively equal status on the other (Elias 1996: 28-29). In England, for a long time, the dividing line between private and public was also subordinate to the question whether one was in good company or with strangers.

The Formality–Informality Span in Germany

3.1 Particularly in comparison with the attention focused on privacy and introductions in English manners books, both these topics are virtually absent in nineteenth- and twentieth-century German manners books. In contrast, the Germans have tended to distinguish rather sharply between public and private, formal and informal. In the words of Stephen Kalberg, 'the public realm is generally characterised by social distance and purely functional exchanges with only formal involvement. Conversely, all "impersonal" values – ... such as achievement, competition, and goal-attainment – are strictly banned from the private sphere' (Kalberg 1987: 608; also Lewin 1948). Germans still behave rather formally in the public arena, as if they distrust it, particularly in the absence of a clear hierarchical setting with clearly designated superordinates and subordinates. In private, however, relationships tend to be experienced as highly personal and as 'immediate, not domesticated by general rules, intent on honesty and profundity' (Dahrendorf 1969: 300), which implies they may involve almost unlimited rights and obligations (Peabody 1985: 113).

3.2 These characteristics can be interpreted as a process-continuity deriving from a distinction made by the bourgeois intelligentsia in eighteenth-century Germany. Blocked from the political centres of power and confronted with an uncompromising aristocratic code, they emphasised their 'depth of feeling', 'honesty' and 'true virtue' as against the 'superficiality', 'falsity', and 'mere outward politeness' of the nobility (Elias 2000: 15-23). A similar social inheritance of the German bourgeois habitus is evident in behaviour in public, where a kind of formality is demanded that varies with hierarchical differences:

> the greater attentiveness and even, in some circumstances, extreme sensitivity to status of middle-class educated Germans erects obstacles to a free mixing from group to group, even if the social skills for doing so are present. This is the case simply because each new social situation requires an assessment of relative status and the assumption of either a posture of deference or leadership, an exercise that is far too stressful to be repeated frequently.
> (Kalberg 1987: 616)

3.3 Accordingly, in the public sphere Germans tend to cling more strongly to hierarchically differentiated formal rules, whereas in private and informal situations, they allow themselves to let go to a greater degree. Throughout the twentieth century, German manners books contained questions such as *Ehrlich oder höflich*? (honest or polite? – a chapter title in Oheim, 1955: 29) as well as many warnings against confiding too much and against *duzen* (using the familiar you). Their formality-informality span has remained wider than that of other countries (Elias 1996: 28).

3.4 *Duzen* (the use of the informal you) and the use of Christian names remained quite restricted until the 1950s, from which time onwards repeated complaints about too hastily crossing these important borderlines signified the presence of the informalising trend. An habitual warning in German manners books is the one against becoming too confidential and going too far by starting to *duz* at office excursions and parties. The authors always insisted that, at the office, the next day such an offer will surely be regretted. For in the daylight of public life, colleagues will realise they were in a night-time cocoon of intimacy when the *Du* was 'offered' – by the eldest or highest in rank, it is never given or requested – and they will want to return to the social distance that used to prevail and that was expressed in *sietzen*. To use the formal *Sie* is to show respect and to appreciate a person in full. Teenagers therefore eagerly await the moment they become entitled to be addressed as such by adults. In the last decade of the twentieth century, the moment at which a young boy or girl is entitled to the *Sie* was specified as lying somewhere between the age of sixteen and eighteen. At that age, 'a young person can claim equalisation' (Uffelmann 1994: 19). In contrast to its usual meaning, equalisation in this case means being entitled to a *larger* social and psychic distance. Apparently, a large variety of subtle differentiations of proximity and distance – of involvement and detachment – endured, even tended to increase, together with elaborate rules for transitions between public and private, *Sie* and *Du*.

German forms of Address: titles and occupational denominations as titles

3.5 Throughout the twentieth century, the authors of German manners books have shown themselves to be aware that the demands in their country on forms of address are exceptionally high; a wide range of titles and occupational denominations that resemble military and semi-military ranks remained in demand:

> In Germany, the title phenomenon is still of major importance, and, in order to avoid hurting neither here nor there, one has to track down and remember all the professional, hierarchical and living relationships of the persons one meets socially. ... it is, for example, extremely embarrassing when titles cannot be indicated, or only falteringly and incorrectly. (Ebhardt 1921, quoted in Krumrey 1984: 417)

3.6 In the 1930s and 1950s, the awareness that there were easier forms of address elsewhere continued: 'Whereas abroad one has long since come to address everyone by his name, even in the highest circles, ... we continue to torment ourselves with the title question, and quite often we get most awkwardly embarrassed because of talking to someone whose exact title we don't know' (Meister 1933, quoted in Krumrey 1984: 421 - 2). And: 'In our country, it is still a common custom in social intercourse to address people by means of occupational and academic titles' (Franken 1951, quoted in Krumrey 1984: 425). Sometimes, advice in this matter was given in a rather factual way: 'One has to consider whether one prefers to write "Lieber Herr Doktor", "Sehr geehrter Herr Doktor" or "Hochverehrter Herr Doktor"; that depends on the age difference and the nature of the relation with the receiver' (Elwenspoek, 1952 quoted in Krumrey 1984: 456). Also in the 1960s, a sentence such as 'Titles provide distinction and generate veritable colour and variety in our lives' was followed by rather moralistic and nationalistic advice:

> Therefore, we had better guard ourselves against the swift imitation of American manners that have reduced all different forms of address to the monotonous Mr. and Mrs X. Our cultural heritage is infinitely more opulent, colourful, hierarchical, and it would only signify further impoverishment if we allowed the diversity of our forms of address to subside to the most prosaic petty forms. (Andreae 1963, quoted in Krumrey 1984: 428, 430)

3.7 From the mid-1960s to the end of the century, most authors of manners books showed a degree of half-hearted resistance to this tradition; in addressing this theme their voices expressed ambivalence:

> In the matter of addressing with title, academic degree, or occupational denomination, I am in fact quite stubborn. Too often I have observed titles being used with some presumption. They create a (needless, I think) distance, because many people allow themselves to be intimidated by them. Neither do I understand those women who still want to be addressed by the title or academic degree of their husband. ... Nowadays, I think, social relations – particularly private ones – would be so much simpler if all were to be addressed soberly by their name. (Zitzewitz 1986: 76)

3.8 The way in which this author turned against the use of presumptuous titles still betrayed resignation. It seems a form of wishful writing, expressing an ideal with an acquiescent sigh. In fact, this style of writing was also used in expressing a similar ideal, captured in the sentence 'Anyone who abstains from formal authority, gains real authority' (*Umgangsformen Heute* 1970: 48; 1988: 41). For this exclamation was followed by the example of a *Generaldirektor* who indeed proposed to omit this title. His move should not be trusted at face value, the authors warned, because as much as his proposal may impress you, 'this impression will fade, of course, if his secretary tells you the next day that her boss insists on being addressed as *Herr Generaldirektor*' (1988: 41- 2). In the 1990s and 2000s, this ambivalence continued, although semi-military ranks like *Geschäftsbereichsleiter* and *Fachbereichsleiter* tend to be abolished at a much higher speed than academic titles.

3.9 The following part of this article aims at interpreting these persistent and uniquely German examples of a wide formality-informality span by placing it in a wider historical and sociological framework. It takes its point of departure in different meanings of friendship.

Friendship in Germany and England

4.1 Compared with the manners books of the other countries under study, German ones are also unique in their emphasis on friendship. They presented extensive accounts on the subject, often as extensive as those on marriage and the relationship between spouses. To rank a friend even higher than a spouse was not exceptional: 'All poets have sung the praises of friendship. ... Goethe ranks friendship "more holy, pure, and spiritual than love" ... No blood ties, no constraints of external relations determine the friend. In love, human beings also follow a natural urge. The friend is chosen freely!' (Weißenfelt 1951: 42-4). This praise of friendship stands in a long tradition. In Knigge's famous manners book, for example, the chapter on manners in relating to friends was longer than the one on relating to women:

> Everything that belongs to your friend, his possessions, his civilian happiness, his health, his reputation, the honour of his wife, the innocence and upbringing of his children, all that should be holy to you, and subject to your care and your caution. Even your most intense passion, your most extravagant craving should respect this impassibility. (Knigge 1977 [1788]: 221)

4.2 German manners books have continued to present elaborate advice on friendship. Nearly always the topic is directly connected to *Duzen*, which may partly explain why English and American manners books have been much less prolix on the subject. But not altogether, for in comparison with even Dutch manners books, the German ones paid far more attention to friendship and *duzen*. An obvious reason for this difference is that neither *Brüderschaftstrinken*, the ritual drinking that marks the transition from *Sie* to *Du*, nor the kind of brotherhood (*Brüderschaft*) that is associated with it, ever existed in the Netherlands. This is related to another difference, already indicated by the term *Brüderschaft*, namely, that in Germany the term *Du* has been primarily, and remained, a kinship term, much more than the Dutch *je* and *jij*. But more importantly, in discussing the topic *tutoyeren* (using the personal pronoun), Dutch manners books never contained lengthy remarks nor the short essays on friendship that were common in German books. Nor did Dutch authors warn people not to start using familiar personal pronouns at an office party. In the German books, however, the topic of the office party and this warning always went hand in hand. Apparently, the special social meaning of the transition from *Sie* to *Du*, marked by a special *rite de passage*, is related to a much stronger sensitivity regarding the public-private distinction.

4.3 Most likely, the question why intimate relationships were hardly ever discussed in twentieth-century

English manners books, also finds an answer by referring to the public-private distinction. But the inference is opposite: the intimacy of friendship and love was apparently considered to be private and delicate, and therefore not really a topic for an etiquette book. English etiquette rules of the nineteenth century occasionally referred to friendship, distinguishing degrees of intimacy that corresponded to the public –private distinction (Curtin 1987: 8), but these distinctions were not repeated in the twentieth century. Authors usually referred to ‘friends and acquaintances’. What counted was the protection offered by privacy, the certainty of being in each other’s good company. Further distinctions were important, of course, but not *socially* important, and there was accordingly no need to discuss them.

4.4 The different connotations of the expression ‘to be in good company’ is another case in point: the English would tend to think of a social gathering in good society, whereas the Germans would think of being among friends, that is, behind the scenes of good society, in private. *Duzen* means friendship (or kinship), and only among friends is one among equals. In all other relations, the Germans search for and find hierarchy, inequality. Therefore, friendship is a very serious matter and the familiar second-person pronoun *Du* is equally important. A section on *Duzen* from 1893 says: ‘The word “friend” offers many and high rights. Therefore one should carefully deliberate to whom to grant that title’ (Schramm 1893: 172). The choice of words in this formulation of friendship was quite principled, the words ‘title’ and ‘high rights’ even suggesting a precedence akin to aristocratic rights and title. A century later, this very attitude was still alive. A Dutch journalist, for many years a correspondent in Germany, reported that he had rarely come across politically mixed friendships, because Germans who would reject a political stance tended to reject the whole way of life that it implied (Meines 1989).

Towards a sociogenesis of friendship in England and Germany

4.5 At this point, the question of the sociogenesis of this kind of friendship arises. Is this friendship more a bourgeois than an aristocratic social heritage, or perhaps a mixture of both? Friendship in the old sense of the warrior nobility was a friendship that implied enemies. It was something to fight for, an alliance or a treaty that, if broken, branded you as a traitor and turned you from a friend into an enemy. As the sociologist Allan Silver (1990) observed, up to the eighteenth century, the space between friend and enemy was not occupied. Friend and enemy were part of a language of war. It was based upon war as a ‘normal’ condition. This is backed up by the common etymology of the words friend and fiend, and also by the related fact that medieval concepts of meeting all had strong connotations of fighting *and* sexual intercourse, thus depicting both ends of the continuum of possibilities when people get closer: they tend to make love or war (Vree 1999). These extreme connotations correspond to relations characterised by rather unrestrained enmity *or* congeniality, possibly in rapid alternation. They also correspond to the knightly and aristocratic stance of standing by your man, being uncompromising, willing and able to fight for him, and to challenge to a fight, a duel, if offended. It is an uncompromising attitude. At the same time, as part and parcel of this warrior code, this friendship had many characteristics of the treaty and the alliance: the bond was never as absolute and universal as the bond of a contract. It was always dependent upon changing power balances, and therefore pragmatic and opportunistic. It was a bond in a warrior world in which violence ranged among the accepted power resources. This made for harsh human relations.

4.6 In contrast, bonds in the world of business were far less dependent on the personal bonds of alliances and treaties. The bonds of contracts were far more universal in the sense of being based upon ‘rules for all’ and backed up by the force of a state monopoly over the use (and the means) of violence. Friendship in the entrepreneurial bourgeois sense departed from a nation-state society with a market. In their contracts and contacts, people largely came to take it for granted that the use violence was excluded. It was this universalism of contracts which allowed for the possibility of a friendship formation with no other strings attached. As Allan Silver has put it:

> strangers in commercial society are not either potential enemies or allies, but authentically indifferent co-citizens - the sort of indifference that enables all to make contracts at all. ... commercial society makes possible a distinction, without extensive precedent in fact or culture, between sympathetic relationships that normatively exclude the ethos of calculation and utility and relationships oriented to instrumentalism and contract. This development both enhances the moral quality of personal relationships and frees them from exclusivistic solidarities expressing pervasive competitiveness. ... Only with impersonal markets in products and services does a parallel system of personal relations emerge whose ethic excludes exchange and utility. (1990: 82-94)

4.7 To a large extent, marriage was also a contract, a marriage contract, and words such as marriage market and marriage broker further illustrate the point. Marriage was (and is) perceived as a practical solution for many reasons, including sexuality and children. Knigge accentuated this contract character of marriage by writing that love is reputedly blind, and instinct driven, but that friendship is based upon harmony in principles and affections (1977 [1788]: 207). Indeed, the bourgeois ideal of friendship was a relationship that transcended the world of treaties and contracts, violence and money; and in that sense, it transcended the bonds of politics and commerce.

4.8 In England, an early development of a parliamentary regime during the eighteenth century implied the development of a readiness to compromise. A relatively high level of this readiness is presupposed for ruling classes to come to peacefully hand over ruling power to opponents, trusting them to be Word Lords, not War Lords, and fight ‘with the power of argument, the skill of persuasion, the art of compromise’ (Elias and Dunning 1986: 37). Throughout the nineteenth century, rich middle-class newcomers were allowed into the centres of power and their good society, provided they knocked at the appropriate doors in the appropriate ways.

4.9 Around the turn of the nineteenth to the twentieth century, when the English centres of power and their good society opened up to the new rich, what happened was an extension of a long tradition of gentrification in which the aristocracy, industrial classes, and intellectual and artistic strata had blended. In the process, the uncompromising part of the old aristocratic code vanished as the treaty-based warrior code and the contract-based market code were synthesised. Norbert Elias has argued that codes have blended in such a way that ‘British formality became in general more informal and British informality more formal than their German counterparts’ (1996: 50). ‘Gladstone’s peculiar mixture of absolute and unswerving righteousness in principle with expediency, opportunism and compromise in practice’ (1996: 169), for example, was related to the fact that the safety of the British population did ‘not primarily depend on a standing army officered by men who stood in the traditions of the old warrior estate, of the landed nobility, but on a military formation specialised for warfare at sea, on a navy’ (1996: 164). The warrior code of the navy was less uncompromising. Commanding a ship and a fleet demanded less ruthless manners of command than did commanding an army, if only because of the smaller social distance between the ranks and the vital importance of the crafts and skills of sailing (Elias 1950, 2007). For this reason, ships are a special type of ‘total institution’ (Goffman 1968) in the sense that survival conditions did ‘force individuals to become integrated in relations of “teamwork” based on a high degree of individual self-control and self-attunement to others’ (2000, 434), and in a way, the same goes for islands like the British Isles.[2] The importance of shipping and particularly of a navy for these island communities to stay clear of foreign occupation for many centuries and characterised therefore by an uninterrupted tradition, all this contributed to relatively smaller social distances and less rigorous social dividing lines. Elias points to a greater ‘permeability of stratum barriers between different estates, particularly after the virtual unification of England, Scotland and Wales in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, compared with that of the corresponding barriers in continental European societies’. And this ‘greater interpenetration of neighbouring social strata facilitated a specific fusion of their codes of norms and a general inclination towards pragmatic compromises’ (Elias 1996: 163-4).

4.10 In what was to become Germany, political power and the associated public sphere remained dominated by an aristocracy for about a century longer than in most other West European countries. Until the unification under Bismarck in the victorious war against France, representatives of the middle classes remained by and large excluded from the good societies of aristocratic courts and therefore, their pride was traditionally attached to intellectuals and artists in a good society centred on universities. In Part One of *The Civilising Process*, Norbert Elias shed light on earlier, particularly eighteenth-century developments of Germany's two good societies, the courts and the universities, and their relation to the development of the German habitus – *habitus* being a shorthand expression for the mentality, the whole distinctive emotional make-up of the people who are thus bonded together. He describes a veritable class conflict between the middle classes and the court nobility. Elias depicts the comparatively low level of social integration in what was to become Germany, and he connects this, on the one hand, to the mass of the rising middle classes being completely cut-off from political activity or power, and, on the other hand, to the formation among these middle classes of a habitus that strongly rejected aristocratic attitudes and values, and instead emphasised learning, education, *Bildung, Herzenbildung* (education of the heart), inner values and virtues. It was middle-class *Kultur* versus the nobility's *Zivilisation*, the university versus the court. Because the carriers of *Kultur* were cut-off from political power, German culture was actually a counterculture (to use a popular term coined to capture the social movements of the 1960s).

4.11 Particularly from 1871 until World War II, this bourgeois habitus amalgamated with certain elements of the aristocratic code into a German national habitus. However, lacking the development of a pacified courtly code like those in England or France, these elements were more directly related to an aristocratic warrior code than to an aristocratic courtly civilisation. As Norbert Elias observed,

> it is military values which have once again grown deep roots in the German tradition of behaviour and feeling. In regard to his own honour, the honour of his country, his Kaiser, his Führer, the officer cannot make any compromises. ... Complete determination, absolute loyalty to principles, uncompromising adherence to one's own convictions, still sound particularly good in German. (1996: 296)[3]

4.12 After the unification in 1871, when the Prussian court of Wilhelm II became a unified and unifying centre, the pride of the middle classes increasingly shifted in the direction of pride attached to the army and the warrior nobility that had accomplished both the unification and the victory over France. It stimulated a blend of codes cherished by the university and the military – which was also expressed in manners books: 'The Prussian soldier's maxim: Breast forward, head high! should serve every young man in the street for guidance, even when he has never been a soldier' (Marschner 1901: 91). Military values spread, and universities, the traditional centres of middle-class good society, became permeated by an awe for the army and its (aristocratic) officers. In this development, the meaning of friendship is likely to have been included. It is as likely, however, that the meaning of friendship before the war of 1871 had been predominantly middle class.

4.13 In the introduction to the late-eighteenth-century book that made his name a brand-name of the whole genre, Freiherr von Knigge gave a range of examples from which he drew the conclusion 'that the most learned of men, if not every now and then most incompetent in all worldly affairs, are at least unlucky enough, due to the lack of a certain dexterity, to be discriminated against.' This is followed by a description of a stiff, highly respected university professor going 'to the residence or to some other city' where people have hardly heard of his name, and where he, in a fine company of about twenty people, is ignored completely or 'is taken for a valet by some stranger' (Knigge 1977 [1790]: 19-22). Thus, Freiherr von Knigge addressed a middle-class public and struck out at them right on their weakest spot by turning their hero, the learned professor, into a scholarly recluse, and worse, into a social nobody at court. Knigge did say 'or some other city', of course, but it is the court capital which sticks in the mind.

4.14 Knigge's celebration of friendship was a celebration of equality. Time and again, he repeated that everything that undermines equality among friends will harm their friendship (1977: 206-24). And he goes further:

> Why have high-ranking and rich people so few sincere feelings of friendship? They are less in need of the spirit. All they are engaged in is to satisfy their passions, to rush after intoxicating, stunning pleasures, to enjoy without interruption, to be flattered, praised, honoured ... They are used to keeping lesser and poorer people at such a great distance from themselves that they are unable to accept any truth from them or bear the thought of putting themselves on a par. In even the best among them, sooner or later the idea awakens that they are made of superior material, and that then kills the friendship. (1977: 208)

4.15 What has been presented thus far suggests the hypothesis that, among the German middle classes, friendship cut across the heavy ranking characteristic of their own social circles and also supported their sense of pride and human value in relation to people who closed their ranks to them and kept them from rising into the political centres and their good societies, the courts. Their bonds of friendship functioned in rivalry to political bonds, and were experienced as based upon the solid and profound inner, that is, non-utilitarian values of kindred souls and hearts, whereas the bonds of friendship among courtiers were depicted by them as not being *real*, as superficial, and as merely based upon ever-changing and never-lasting pragmatically calculated political interests.

4.16 Friendship is an ideal of youth, an ideal of bonds more pure and opposed to the utilitarian bonds of adult professional or business life. Therefore, middle-class ideals of friendship will have found an additional thrust by being adopted and internalised by young people, and particularly by students at the universities. Students came to the university from the various politically autonomous parts of the German lands. They were in need of developing new forms of bonding, and *Freundschaft* was able to transcend regional differences.[4]

4.17 During the course of the nineteenth century, there seems to have been an ongoing penetration of the norms and attitudes of the warrior and courtly class. Many student fraternities [*Studentenverbindungen*], particularly the duelling ones, developed military attitudes and ideals, as attached to words such as discipline, honour, toughness, ruthlessness, and iron will, the will to power [*Wille zur Macht*]. As modernisations of the army also implied a functional democratisation and the *Offizierskorps* (with the exception of some elite regiments) opened up increasingly to non-aristocrats, the student fighting fraternities and the officers' messes formed a model-setting good society.

> The code of the students and officers was the German equivalent of the code of the 'English gentleman', in function if not in substance. ... It can be said that these upper classes, different as they were in the many states and cities of Germany, in fact formed a single large society of men who were *satisfaktionsfähig* – able to demand and give satisfaction in a duel. ... In this way, types of relationships which have always been characteristic of warrior societies ... persisted into the twentieth century in Germany and some other societies as a sign of membership of the establishment. (Elias 1996: 50-1).

4.18 Whereas the Germans rated being *satisfaktionsfähig* - 'duelable': qualified socially to take part in a duel - as the main criterion for belonging to good society, the English had *vorstellungsfähig* - 'introduceable': qualified socially to take part in an introduction – as their main criterion, the boundaries of the latter being comparatively fluent and flexible. Although a highly elaborate and rigid formal social life developed in England, it was embraced by the aristocratic and middle classes in both town and country, and it left open the possibility 'for upwardly mobile individuals and parts of families to gain access to new groups if they had the necessary qualifications' (Davidoff 1973: 27). In Wilhelmine Germany, both the university and the military could give access to good society, but the code of honour that was formalised - the rules of duelling - was military. This also implied that ideals of manliness tended towards the military code: 'Our army, the navy included, has of course proven in every respect to be ... a precious school for manliness' (Gurlitt 1906: 4). According to this author real manliness meant the will to power, and a real man, Bismarck, had set the example: 'it is not the masses, not conference resolutions and political organisations, but predominantly the clear will of single men that takes the world forwards.' (Gurlitt 1906: 48). Even dissident voices of the time testified to the codification of the iron will and the will to power: 'In Germany, in certain circles that imagine themselves to possess a highly distinguished sense of honour, although in reality it is in many cases an entirely false idea of honour, it is the regrettable custom to have insults followed by duels' (Eltz 1908: 444).

4.19 Elias's finding, reported in *The Germans*, that after Germany's unification its many local good societies also tended towards unification, is backed up and supplemented by a study of the German gymnastics movement [*Turnbewegung*]. Drawing on Elias, the sociologist Michael Krüger has reported how this movement via a multitude of schools and clubs functioned as a good society for the German middle and lower classes, just as student fraternities functioned in that way for the upper classes. The habit of *duzen* in the gymnastic good society was an imitation of the same habit among the officers, and it had roughly the same function: '*das offiziersbrüderliche* "*Du*" created the solidarity feeling of a brotherhood. Quite a few members of this lower good society tried to move upwards into the higher one by becoming a reserve officer. This was possible by volunteering for a one-year military service, called: 'the servants' entrance to the *satisfaktionsfähigen* upper classes' (Krüger 1996: 425-6).

4.20 It seems that the habit of *duzen* among officers and in the gymnastics movement has extended to *duzen* among colleagues. In 1934, the author of a manners book noted that the comradely spirit of working or playing sport together may lead to a *Du* 'used without any formality and without special statements', but this is the *Du* of comrades, colleagues, or companions, and has to be clearly distinguished from the *Du* between friends (Dietrich 1934: 80). In 1995, another author admitted that working in a team with a good team spirit easily leads to a rather general *duzen*, but added that this should never become a group constraint (Wolff 1995: 64).

4.21 Throughout the nineteenth century, but particularly in Wilhelmine Germany, the middle-class ideal of friendship will have blended somewhat with the military and aristocratic codes of male bonding, making friendship look and sound like a serious wartime bond with survival value, but not with much warmth. This hardening of friendship was limited, however, if only because friendship remained an ideal of equality and of transcending or escaping the necessary bonds for making a living. Moreover, as the ideal of friendship came to function less in rivalry with aristocratic 'superficial' bonds, its function of rivalry was broadened to the public sphere as a whole, thus accentuating and hardening the private-public distinction. Whereas the English had succeeded to a far greater extent than the Germans in locating their ideal of equality *in* good society, allowing them, ideally, to treat others either as equals or as strangers, the Germans had located their ideal of equality outside good society, to some extent even outside society. In this respect, therefore, the English ritual of 'being properly introduced' and the German ritual of *Brüderschaft trinken*, marking the transition from *Sie* to *Du*, despite their many great differences are functional equivalents in the sense that both mark a similarly significant change in the balance of involvement and detachment: the transition from a rather formal relationship to a more equal and informal one, an important decline in social and psychic distance, and an equally important rise in equality and warmth. Drinking a 'brotherhood' or *schmollieren* (student language) was to 'put one's glasses to one another three times and shake hands, saying words such as 'Be my friend!' and 'You shall live!' Students are in the habit of emptying their glass with arms intertwined and of giving the brotherly kiss to each other' (Adelfels 1900, quoted in Krumrey 1984: 470). The importance of this drinking ritual and of the change from *Sie* to *Du* implies that access to the back rooms of friendship's equality in Germany were as well-guarded and ritualised as the drawing rooms of introduced equality in England.

4.22 These differences between England and Germany do not only largely explain why friendship and *duzen* appeared so prominently in German manners books; they also account for the differences in the *formality-informality span* or *gradient* of the two societies. They explain why, comparing like with like, this synchronic span is much larger in Germany, why formal behaviour in that country is far more ostentatious, but also why the chance of informally letting oneself go is comparatively greater in Germany than in Britain (Elias 1996: 28-31).

4.23 The importance of friendship as a way of transcending or escaping a world where rank used to be all-pervasive, becomes even more poignant for understanding that these differences in rank used to be expressed in hard and commanding ways. Not only was Germany a strongly hierarchical society, but direct and plain expression of status differences and the related feelings of superiority and inferiority was also expected. Late in the twentieth century, a correspondent in Germany could still report a similar habitus to his Dutch readers:

> Friendliness and a serious commission do not match. Anyone who has received the commission will feel it is not being taken seriously enough, and 'consequently' they will not fulfil it seriously. If you start off by being too friendly, things hardly ever go well straight away. First, the commission has to be expressed clearly and distinctly, and particularly in a slightly brusque tone. Once this seriousness ritual has been performed, another tone of communication becomes possible, but even then one should carefully measure friendliness in order not to undermine the arrangement just made. (Meines 1989)

A small excursion to the internet networks of 'friends' and Google Street View

5.1 The arrival of *Facebook* and other such networks of 'friends' on the internet presents interesting comparative material. The differences in the meaning of friendship would lead us to expect a significantly smaller participation of the German population in these largely 'public friendship' networks. An indication in this direction is found in the different percentages of *Facebook* penetration in countries with more than one million *Facebook* users. These percentages range from 45 percent in Norway to 5 percent in Poland, and the UK is number 5 on this scale, with a penetration percentage of 38.67, and Germany appears to be number 38, with a penetration of 8.89 percent.[5] In Germany, until the second half of 2009, *VZ Networks* had a larger penetration than *Facebook*, but both networks had less than 20 per cent penetration,[6] which is about half the penetration in the UK of *Facebook* alone. However, this comparison is complicated by the fact that internet friendships are a mixture of public and private as well as of virtual and real time, while they are relatively easy to end, which is called 'unfriending' or 'defriending'. The difference between the two countries is nevertheless large enough to remain impressive.

5.2 The continued German preoccupation with the borderlines between private and public also appeared quite strikingly in the media outcry - backed by government ministers - over the perceived breach of privacy by showing private houses on Google's *Street View*. In September 2010, *Der Spiegel* reported that 'hundreds of thousands' of Germans petitioned to have their homes blurred on Google's Street View, while Google reported Germans to be the most enthusiastic users of the panorama picture service among the nations where Street View is not yet operative (*Spiegel* 38/2010: 187).

Concluding remarks

6.1 The striking differences in national habitus on which this article has focused, can be recognised and traced up to the present day. They can be understood and largely explained by placing them in the wider context of differences and changes in national class structures, that is, by connecting them to differences in social and national integration. Particularly important are differences in the organisation of social mobility, in the degrees and ways in which national centres of power and their good societies opened up their ranks to newcomers of the rising strata.

6.2 Establishing a *Freundschaft* and *duzen* in Germany as well as ‘being properly introduced’ in England can be characterised as functional equivalents in opening the door to (greater) equality and intimacy, and as specific forms of social and psychic rapprochements. The comparison of the German ideal of equality as expressed in *Duzfähigkeit* or *duzability* with the English one of *introduceability* has also provided a key to understand why ideals of friendship and equality for Germans came to lie behind the scenes of public life and why the transition from *Sie* to *Du* is a withdrawal from public life with *Brüderschaftstrinken* as a *rite de passage*. The British place(d) their ideals of equality and friendship much more strongly in the public sector, consisting of clubs of friends, so to speak, whose equal members have all been introduced or co-opted with shaking hands as a *rite de passage*. It explains why in English manners books the key question dealt with is when and how someone could be introduced, and why German authors did not treat this question as important. In England, someone who was properly introduced into a particular circle was an equal and a friend, and could lay claim to be treated with equality and treat others that way. That was, and still is, nonexistent in Germany. There, all public life is saturated with ranking and hierarchy; equality and friendship can only exist outside.

Notes

[1] This article is a by-product of my study of changes in American, Dutch, English and German etiquette or manners books from the end of the nineteenth century to the end of the beginning of the twenty-first century. It has resulted in two books – *Sex and Manners* (2004), and *Informalization* (2007). Readers can find a broader context and further elaboration of what follows in the latter book.

[2] Elias addresses England’s island situation in a note. Here, he writes, among others: ‘In England the relatively pacified nobility, together with leading bourgeois groups, succeeded very early in sharply restricting the king’s control of weapons and the army, and particularly the use of physical violence within the country itself. And this structure of the monopoly of physical force, made possible, to be sure, only by the country’s island character, played no small part in the formation of the specifically English national character. … The fact that in England the pressure of foreign military power on the individual was from an early stage much less heavy than in any other major Continental country, is extremely closely connected to the other fact that the constraint which the individual had to exert on himself, particularly in all matters related to the life of the state, grew stronger and more all-round than in the great continental nations. In this way, as an element of social history, the island character and the whole nature of the country have indeed, in a great variety of ways, exerted a formative influence on the national character’ (Elias, 2000: 548).

[3] Since World War II, the uncompromising attitude, this element of a warrior code, has receded, and a ‘revised’ middle-class habitus has become the German national habitus. An example is a German author who speaks of the ‘sharp contrast between German and foreign views on the importance attached to “partly giving in”. We view, or used to view, rigid insistence upon a total claim as proud, brave and masculine, whilst the rest of the world views it as foolish and destructive’(Meissner, 1951: 242).

[4] I owe this idea to Michael Schröter.

[5] http://www.facebakers.com/countries-with-facebook/ (data copied on 1-3-2010)

[6] http://www.faz.net/s/Rub2F3F4B59BC1F4E6F8AD8A246962CEBCD/Doc~E591479D5FD024E68B6655617207FDA27~ATpl~Ecommon~Scontent.html Many thanks to Jakob Pastoetter.

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