

orientierte. Zumindest theoretisch wären da andere Vor- und Leitbilder denkbar gewesen, die mit der sukzessiven Verbürgerlichung der Universitäten im Verlauf des 18. Jahrhunderts ja auch Raum greifen sollten.

Zukünftige Forschungen hätten somit zumindest aus meiner Perspektive auch diesen Fragestellungen in empirischen Studien weiter nach zu gehen. Daneben fällt, nimmt man die Beiträge dieses Bandes ein letztes Mal vergleichend in den Blick, auf, dass insbesondere diejenigen Angehörigen der Universitäten, die nicht zu den Eliten zählten, deren universitäre Karrieren scheiterten, die nicht mit machten bei diesem ‚Theater‘ um ständische Distinktion und akademische Äußerlichkeiten, nur gelegentlich und auch nur am Rande erwähnt werden. Hier läge – vielleicht – ein weiteres Forschungsfeld für eine kultur- und alltagsgeschichtlich gewendete Geschichte der frühneuzeitlichen Universitäten.

Brains or Brawn?

What were Early Modern Universities for?

von Herman Roodenburg

Around 1630 a professor at the University of Leiden met a promising student by the name of Dionysius Vossius. The professor – he was the famous humanist and philologist Claude de Saumaise – was clearly pleased with the boy. In a letter to the lad's father, Gerardus Vossius (another celebrated humanist and philologist), he praised the boy's countenance, gait, and bearing – in short, his overall elegance and physical grace.¹

Such praise, focusing on a student's physical appearance, was far from exceptional in the Dutch Republic. For instance, in 1644 the courtier and poet Constantijn Huygens noted that Constantijn the younger, his eldest son, having just enrolled at Leiden University, had become "strong and manly for his age, also having a handsome countenance and bearing."² Like Dionysius he was complimented not so much for his intellectual or scholarly qualities (though they were considerable) but for his physical grace.

So, what were early modern universities for? Was it the students' minds or was it their physique, their bodily eloquence, that their parents and professors were interested in? Was it brains or brawn? Or, to put it another way, is it possible to really understand the universities of early modern Europe without the numerous dancing, fencing, and riding schools that, from the end of the sixteenth century on, turned up in almost every university town? Were such schools meant merely for recreation, as many university historians have claimed, deserving no more than a few paragraphs under the heading of "student life"? Or were the dancing, fencing, and riding schools, with all their physical exercises, part and parcel of a student's education? In 1600, Ludolf van Ceulen, a renowned Leiden fencing master, was appointed professor of mathematics at Leiden University. Was that purely coincidental? And what about the Grand Tour, which so often completed a university education and as a rule included dancing, fencing, and riding lessons at French colleges and universities? How did such traveling through France and

1 Frans Felix Blok, *Isaac Vossius en zijn kring. Zijn leven tot zijn afscheid van koningin Christina van Zweden, 1618–1655*, Groningen 1999, p. 18.

2 Constantijn Huygens, *De jongelingsjaren van de kinderen*, in: Arthur Eyffinger (ed.), *Huygens herdacht. Catalogus bij de tentoonstelling in de Koninklijke Bibliotheek ter gelegenheid van de 300^{ste} sterfdag van Constantijn Huygens*, The Hague 1987, here p. 141.

Italy relate to the students' intellectual and physical capacities, their eloquence of the body?

In this article, I aim to demonstrate that the early modern elites must have known about *habitus*, about bodily or habitual memory in the modern, Bourdieuan sense of the word.³ More precisely, these families must have realized that their continuance, their social position in the near or not so near future, to a large part depended on such memory, on how they might successfully incorporate the prized social and physical graces in their sons and daughters. That is why physical training and the finishing touch, provided by universities and the Grand Tour, were considered essential to boys' education. It all centered on incorporating practices, on how through bodily memory the social and physical graces could be literally incarnated in the bodies, in the countenance, gait, and bearing, of these well-to-do children. Ever since the days of Baldassare Castiglione and his famous *Il Libro del Cortegiano* (1530), European elites looked upon such bodily knowledge as more substantial than all the book knowledge, the "pedantry," acquired at school and university. Wisdom from books could be gained by all social classes, by the children of merchants and even of artisans, if they studied hard. But knowing how to move, both in its literal and figurative sense, was not intended for them. Such cultural capital was exclusive, could only be obtained by the elites. I will draw most of my examples from the Dutch Republic.

Grace and Bodily Memory

In one of the first Dutch studies on social character the minister, politician, and man of letters, Willem Antony Ockerse (1760–1826), writes: "People of standing have a certain *savoir faire*, which distinguishes them from the multitude and which is so to the manner born that it even reveals their birth, when dressed as peasants and under quite divergent circumstances." Indeed, "there is even distinction in their features, in the shape of their bodies: something delicate, something uncommon, or how shall I name it?"⁴

Sentiments such as these were widespread in early modern Europe. In many ways our informant merely echoed what many observers had expressed before

3 Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, Cambridge 1977; cf. Herman Roodenburg, Pierre Bourdieu. *Issues of Embodiment and Authenticity*, in: *Etnofoor* 17 (2005), pp. 215–226. The present article is largely based on: Herman Roodenburg, *The Eloquence of the Body. Studies on Gesture in the Dutch Republic*, Zwolle 2004.

4 Willem Antony Ockerse, *Ontwerp tot eene algemeene characterkunde*, 3 vols., Amsterdam 1788–1797, III, p. 18.

him. But what was this *savoir faire*? And what exactly distinguished "people of standing" from the "multitude"? The minister had no name for it, and this was also common. One Dutch manual of civility describes it as a talent to please, but that talent "depends on something I do not know how to name and which the French call *je ne sais quoi*, or, I do not know." It is "hard to describe," the author continues, but he knows one thing for certain: it "cannot be imitated, it is inbred (...) all effort is in vain."⁵

This may come as a surprise. For if this *je ne sais quoi*, this mysterious *savoir faire* is something one simply has or not why is a manual necessary in the first place? If it is inbred, are not all efforts to imitate it in vain? And why does almost every guide to manners contain this paradox, beginning with Castiglione's *Cortegiano*?

As has been noted, it is in Renaissance Italy that the first users of the *je ne sais quoi* are found. It denoted an indefinable grace, an elusive quality that Cicero already described as *venustas* or *suavitas*, and Quintilian as *gratia*. But it is a grace, according to the Tuscan poet Agnolo Firenzuola, "which is not in our books" and which is, "as one says of things that we do not know how to express, *un non so che*."⁶

Thanks to Castiglione, the notion would soon spread to Spain, France, England, and a host of other countries as well. As Cesare Gonzaga, one of the characters in Castiglione's famous dialogue, would have it, it is a grace that should accompany all the courtier's actions, gestures and habits as a seasoning (a *sangue*). And he concludes, "who has grace finds grace," which can be construed as the central idea behind the dialogue and, indeed, behind all the civility texts, all the *arts de plaire*, to follow.⁷

The *Cortegiano* was an overwhelming success, finding an enthusiastic audience among all the elites of Europe, nobles and non-nobles alike.⁸ Apparently, all these readers wanted to know about grace and how to acquire it for themselves, but that, of course, was the rub. In the words of Gonzaga, such grace "is often

5 [C. Van Laar], *Het groot ceremonie-boeck der beschaafde zeeden, wellevendheid, ceremonieel, en welvoegende hoffelykheden onderwyzende hoe ieder een ... zich behoefde te gedraagen, om zich zelve in deze wereld, bemind en gelukkig te maaken*, Amsterdam n.d. [1735], p. 101.

6 Quoted in: Samuel Holt Monk, *A grace beyond the reach of art*, in: *Journal of the History of Ideas* 5 (1944), pp. 131–150, here p. 139; cf. Domna C. Stanton, *The Aristocrat as Art. A Study of the 'Honnête Homme' and the 'Dandy' in Seventeenth- and Nineteenth-Century French Literature*, New York 1980, pp. 207–211.

7 Baldesar Castiglione, *The Book of the Courtier*; the Singleton translation, an authoritative text criticism, ed. Daniel Javitch, New York/London 2002, p. 30 (I, 24).

8 For an excellent survey of the *Cortegiano's* reception, see Peter Burke, *The Fortunes of the Courtier: The European Reception of Castiglione's "Cortegiano"*, Cambridge 1995.

a gift of nature and the heavens." And Count Ludovico da Canossa, another of Castiglione's characters, concurs. As he puts it, "it is almost proverbial that grace is not learned."⁹

As a matter of fact, Castiglione presents a double paradox. He professes to teach what cannot be learned and he aims, though not exclusively, at an audience, the nobility at court, that is not supposed to need any teaching: it simply has grace.¹⁰ Of interest to my discussion is the first paradox. How could Castiglione and his numerous adaptors and translators all over Europe speak of "nature," of something "inbred," and still treat it as "history," as something "socially acquired"? Was this also a paradox for them or did they see things in a different, presumably far more subtle way?

Part of the answer, I believe, lies in what René Descartes, a long-time inhabitant of the Dutch Republic and a close friend of Constantijn Huygens, called "corporeal memory," in the numerous ways in which the past may sediment in the body.¹¹ Borrowing a few notions from Pierre Bourdieu and Diana Taylor, I will argue that the elites of early modern Europe were quite aware of a bodily memory; indeed, that taking such a memory for granted they spared no effort in molding or "fashioning" their own and their children's bodies in order to acquire the prized *je ne sais quoi*.¹²

A Bodily Situated Transfer

The popularity among European elites of "fashioning" or "cultivating" one's body (or one's mind) was to a large extent a Renaissance innovation. Since Antiquity deportment had been seen as expressing the moral and social self, but from the fifteenth century on, perhaps for the first time in the pedagogical writings of Pier Paolo Vergerio (ca. 1370–1444), deportment and movement came to be generally considered qualities to be cultivated rather than simply observed.¹³

9 Castiglione, *The Book of the Courtier* (wie Anm. 7), p. 31 (I, 25).

10 On this double paradox, see Burke, *The Fortunes of the Courtier* (wie Anm. 8), p. 32.

11 René Descartes, *The Philosophical Writings*, tr. John Cottingham et al., vol. III, Cambridge 1991, pp. 143–146 (letters written in 1640 to Marin Mersenne and Lazare Meyssonier); cf. Tim Reiss, *Denying the body? Memory and the dilemmas of history in Descartes*, in: *Journal of the History of Ideas* 57 (1996), pp. 587–607.

12 For a similar but also different Bourdieuan view of the early modern student, see Marian Füssel, *Devianz als Norm? Studentische Gewalt und akademische Freiheit in Köln im 17. und 18. Jahrhundert*, in: *Westfälische Forschungen* 54 (2004), pp. 145–166.

13 Anna Bryson, *From Courtesy to Civility: Changing Codes of Conduct in Early Modern England*, Oxford 1998; Sharon Fermor, *Movement and gender in sixteenth-century Italian painting*, in: *The Body Imaged: The Human Form and Visual Culture since the Renaissance*, ed.

It could be said that in this cultivation the European elites eventually distinguished two bodies. The ideal of a fine and graceful body was articulated in numerous manuals of civility and represented, for instance, in dancing, fencing, and horse riding as well as in painting and acting. However, juxtaposed against this elusive ideal body was one's actual physical body which, the more it strove to live up to the ideal, the more it was seen as deficient or even as failing in this endeavor, and thus in need of fashioning from early childhood on.¹⁴

How did such fashioning work? How did the elites cultivate their bearings in such a way that every gesture, stance, or movement would convey the impression of "naturalness," of being truly "inbred"? First of all, as the French historian Georges Vigarello pointed out, their bodies should be upright. Indeed, parents did everything possible to correct a child's stooped posture or other physical defects such as a drooping head or bandy legs. If need be, orthopedic appliances and even surgery were called upon to remedy the situation.

Children having no such shortcomings were taken in hand as well, and as early as possible. If a deformity showed itself right after birth, the mother, midwife, or a doctor would mold the still pliable limbs into shape. Then, in the first months of life the children were firmly wrapped in swaddling clothes, after which they were dressed in tight-fitting children's corsets until the age of five or six. From then on the boys, embarking on their first physical exercises, could do without such appliances. Instead they were trained, often by private masters, in the arts of dancing, fencing, and riding horses – practices that, quite apart from their social and recreational functions, were explicitly aimed at developing a natural and upright posture. The daughters of the elite were generally excluded from such exertions, condemned to their stays or corsets for the rest of their lives. Of course, they had their dancing lessons, like the instruction for boys aimed at acquiring a gracious, upright bearing. Still, theirs was always a softer, more gentle grace than the robust and muscular variety expected of their brothers.¹⁵

K. Adler/M.R. Pointon, New York 1993, pp. 129–145; Hans-Ulrich Musolf, *Erziehung und Bildung in der Renaissance: Von Vergerio bis Montaigne*, Cologne 1997.

14 A similar (though certainly more extreme) distinction is still found in present-day classical ballet. Especially for female dancers, the crux of the matter is grace, about a body moving seemingly without effort. But to acquire such a body, to gradually incorporate this natural, involuntarily flowing movement, dancers have to train for many years and often for four or five hours a day. For this distinction, see Susan Foster, *Dancing Bodies*, in: *Meaning in Motion: New Cultural Studies of Dance*, ed. J. Desmond, Durham/London 1997, pp. 235–247.

15 Georges Vigarello, *The upward training of the body from the age of chivalry to courtly civility*, in: *Fragments for a History of the Human Body*, ed. M. Feher, New York 1989, pp. 149–196; on differences between boys and girls, see esp. Iris Marion Young, *Throwing Like a Girl and Other Essays in Feminist Philosophy and Social Theory*, Bloomington/Indianapolis 1990, pp. 141–159.

Following the lead of Michel Foucault and other thinkers, one might interpret all this physical molding as demonstrating a pan-European process of increasing social discipline, yet another instance of how the body, far from being a natural entity, was socially constructed by differing disciplinary regimes. But this would grant an essentially passive role to the body, in which, moreover, issues of gender, such as those just touched upon, would hardly find a place.¹⁶ In reality, the body played a far more active role. It was a matter of tradition, of a bodily situated transfer. And central to this transfer was a Bourdieu-like bodily memory: the body's ability to "remember," as part of its daily practices and at a largely doxic or pre-discursive level, a wide variety of skills or habits. This is what most physical exercises entailed.

To approach matters from a different angle, it has been suggested somewhat provocatively that reading the *Cortegiano* is like learning to ride a bicycle. As the literary historian Richard Lanham notes, Castiglione does not teach "a pattern of concepts, of whatever sort, but a skill."¹⁷ I believe this comparison, meant to challenge the long-standing view of the *Cortegiano* as merely an idealistic, Neo-Platonist tract, is a compelling one. After all, riding a bicycle is one of the "bodily techniques" discussed by the anthropologist Marcel Mauss in arguing how a kind of habitual memory is sedimented in the body.¹⁸ Once someone has learned to ride a bicycle (or to dance, fence, or ride a horse, one might add) he or she just does it, without reflection; it is a pre-reflexive, habitual process. In short, what Lanham and others suggested is that the courtier's grace, resulting from habit, becomes in itself a habit, a habitual state.¹⁹

Perhaps, then, there was no paradox. Once the techniques were literally incorporated due to all the fashioning or cultivating, they could look "natural" and "inbred." It all centered on "grace" or, to be more precise and follow Castiglione, on *sprezzatura*, a kind of effortless in which no exertion or intentionality was ever to shine through.

16 Lois McNay, *Gender, habitus and the field: Pierre Bourdieu and the limits of reflexivity*, in: *Theory, Culture and Society* 16 (1999), pp. 95–117, esp. 96–98.

17 Richard Lanham, *The Motives of Eloquence: Literary Rhetoric in the Renaissance*, New Haven/London 1976, pp. 149–150; Eduardo Saccone, *Grazia, sprezzatura, affettazione in the Courtier*, in: *Castiglione: The Ideal and the Real in Renaissance Culture*, ed. R.W. Hanning/D. Rosand, New Haven/London 1983, pp. 51–52.

18 Marcel Mauss, *Body Techniques*, in: *Ders., Sociology and Psychology. Essays*, London 1979, pp. 95–123.

19 Lanham speaks not of a pre-reflexive but merely of an 'intuitive response'. Cf. Saccone, *Grazia* (wie Anm. 17), who interprets the courtier's grace as an Aristotelian 'virtue, resulting from habit, become in itself a habit; a habitual state'.

Gardening Metaphors

Let us have a closer look at the terminology. Concepts such as "habitus" but also "inclination" or "disposition" were used centuries before Bourdieu, both in the pedagogical literature and in the civility texts of the Ancien Régime. They were part of what Rebecca Bushnell has described as the contemporary "gardening metaphors," images that compared the raising of children to the practices of pruning, bending, and weeding in gardening.²⁰ For instance, in his *De civilitate morum puerilium* (1530), the little booklet that together with Castiglione's *Cortegiano* would launch the tradition of civility texts, Erasmus likened "young bodies" to "young shoots."²¹ Similarly, Castiglione speaks of the hidden "seeds" and "virtues" in all men, the sprouts of which have to be tended in the right way, even among the nobility.²²

According to Bushnell, there were actually two sides to humanist pedagogy. Repression (or one might say social discipline) was one side, while respect for nature's claims, for the child's "nature," "seeds," or "inclinations" was another. As Erasmus wrote, such "nature" is present from the first, necessitating the parents or teachers to start their pedagogy of pruning, bending, and weeding as early as possible. This was true of the child's mind but also of his or her body, gesture, and manners; these should be bent too.²³

At the root of this pedagogy was the rediscovery in fifteenth-century Italy of Cicero's *Tusculanae Disputationes* and his particular use of the term "cultura." Rather than being a matter of training according to some pre-established model determined by tradition and status, education became a question of nursing the child's natural growth, of tilling the seeds already present.²⁴ One of the first humanists, Aeneas Silvio Piccolomini (1405–1464), phrased it as follows in his *De liberorum educatione*:

"As regards a boy's physical training, we must bear in mind that we aim at implanting habits that will prove beneficial through life (...). A boy should be taught to hold his head erect, to look straight and fearlessly before him and to bear himself with dignity whether walking, standing, or sitting (...). Games and exercises which develop the muscular activities and the general carriage of the person should be encouraged by every Teacher. For

20 Rebecca W. Bushnell, *A Culture of Teaching: Early Modern Humanism in Theory and Practice*, Ithaca 1996, esp. ch. 3.

21 *Collected Works of Erasmus: Literary and Educational Writings*, vol. III, ed. J. K. Sowards, Toronto 1985, p. 277.

22 Castiglione, *The Ideal and the Real* (wie Anm. 17), p. 21 (I, 14), p. 216 (IV, 13).

23 Bushnell, *A Culture of Teaching* (wie Anm. 20), pp. 89–103.

24 Musolf, *Erziehung und Bildung in der Renaissance* (wie Anm. 13).

such physical training not only cultivates grace of attitude but secures the healthy play of our bodily organs and establishes the constitution."²⁵

Piccolomini wrote his manual for Ladislas, king of Bohemia and Hungary. In the last decade of the seventeenth century, the philosopher John Locke published a similar educational tract, dedicated in this case not to a monarch but to an English commoner, his friend Edward Clarke. Yet the tilling of civility had lost none of its importance. Locke opposes a method by which children's memories are loaded with rules and precepts. Instead, he prefers to make them repeat an action over and over again. Such constant practice has two advantages. First, it is possible to observe whether it is an action a child is able to perform, and, second, as Locke continues:

"Another Thing got by it will be this; That by repeating the same Action, till it be grown habitual in them, the Performance will not depend on Memory, or Reflection (...) but will be natural in them. Thus bowing to a Gentleman when he salutes him, and looking in his Face when he speaks to him, is by constant use as natural to a well-bred Man, as breathing; it requires no Thought, no Reflection."²⁶

Of course, what Locke discusses here is grace: how, resulting from habit, it itself becomes a habit or habitual state; or, to put it differently, how it may be incarnated in a child's body and how subsequently in pleasing others the child may find grace, may win the favor of one's betters and peers. Children may fall into such grace "when, by a constant Practice, they have fashion'd their Carriage, and made all those little Expressions of Civility and Respect, which Nature or Custom has established in Conversation, so easy to themselves, that they seem not Artificial or Studied, but naturally to flow from a sweetness of Mind, and a well turn'd Disposition."

Perhaps most striking is Locke's explicit stating of the doxic, pre-reflective dimensions of learning: "It requires no Thought, no Reflection." There is no talk here of a bodily or material memory. Instead, memory is equated with thought and reflection, with what Descartes described as intellectual memory. But like Piccolomini, Locke speaks of "planting habits" and offers another instance, perhaps one of the best, of how the early modern elite in raising its children seems at least to have assumed a corporeal memory, a bodily situated transfer "on the hither side of words and concepts," as Bourdieu phrased it.

Diana Taylor, a scholar working in the tradition of American performance studies, has also helpfully distinguished between what she calls the "archive"

25 Quoted in: William H. Woodward, *Studies in Education during the Age of the Renaissance, 1400-1600*, New York 1967, pp. 137-138.

26 John Locke, *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*, ed. W. John/Jean S. Yolton, Oxford 1989, pp. 120-121.

and the "repertoire." Archival memory, according to Taylor, exists as documents, maps, literary texts, letters, archaeological remains, bones, videos, films, or compact discs. Conversely, the repertoire exists as embodied memory, as performances, gestures, orality, movements, dancing, and singing.²⁷

Distinctions such as these are vital in qualifying the role of written culture. It is important to bear in mind, for instance, that one of the main sources on manners, the manual of civility, was basically a prompt to performance, nothing more than a mnemonic device. According to the French historian Roger Chartier, these and other texts, like the popular writings on the "art of conversation" or even the *artes moriendi*, "had the precise function of disappearing as discourse."²⁸ In such cases transmission depended eventually on embodied culture, on performances, gestures, orality, and so on, and far less on written culture. Clearly, the early modern elites knew about this, even making it the base of their own continuance. And few if any of the manuals failed to drive the message home: no one would ever grasp the codes of civility simply by reading a couple of civility texts. In this regard, the upper classes of the Ancien Régime were far less wedded to the word than we are inclined to think.

In other words, I believe that in making us look beyond written culture, a joining of practice and performance perspectives may help us to understand the contemporary elites' unremitting interest in molding and exercising their bodies and to grasp the role of an active and unfolding body within all this cultivating of the embodied or habitual memory.

An Exclusive World

Let us return to the role of the universities and the Grand Tour. All the molding and exercising served a single end: the crafting of a handsome young man who in entering the world would not be hampered by a lack of physical grace, and whose "inbred" ease and elegance would win him the favor of his peers and betters. This, then, is what mattered to the parents and to those who might further their sons' careers, for instance, university professors. As Constantijn Huygens tells us himself, he was so proud of his son's physical graces, his handsome countenance and bearing, because now he could be presented "without anxiety" to the "World," to the best circles available, both in the Dutch Republic and abroad.²⁹

27 Diana Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire. Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas*, Durham/London 2003, pp. 18-22.

28 Roger Chartier, *The Cultural Uses of Print in Early Modern France*, Princeton 1987, 6; on the art of conversation, see Peter Burke, *The Art of Conversation*, Cambridge 1993, pp. 98-112.

29 See note 2.

Part of that presentation was the Grand Tour, the educational trip to France or Italy or, less popular, to England or Germany.

Constantijn Huygens and his sons were largely taught at home, more or less like the contemporary nobility. Other children visited one of the numerous dancing and fencing schools or the occasional riding school and continued to do so while attending the university. If one is to believe the Frenchman Jean de Parival (1605–1669), who spent most of his life in Leiden, this university town (which was so popular with Europe's Protestant nobility) was full of *maîtres d'exercice*, offering instruction in the handling of arms, mathematics, dancing, drawing, and music. As one of the fathers wrote, the boys should seriously continue their "exercises of singing, fencing, and dancing, which they had already received at home."³⁰ Often such schools offered a combination of courses. One educational institution in Dordrecht, begun in 1630, taught dancing, fencing, and mathematics. Mathematics, or rather geometry, was crucial to dancing and fencing, which were matters of proportion, of precise and geometrical steps and moves. The times when fencing consisted mainly of handling the long sword and of hacking and striking were gone. Since the end of the sixteenth century the emphasis was placed on the more elegant rapier techniques and, quite consonant with the new codes of civility, on swiftness, agility, and limberness.³¹

Of course, none of these noble families aspired to a university career for their sons, at least not for the elder sons. No *honnête homme*, brought up for a world of "civil conversation," an exclusive world of culture and civility, would ever consider such a career, though many of these well-bred sons were seriously interested in science and the arts and often succeeded in gaining recognition for their achievements. Much of this philosophy derived from the *Cortegiano* and related texts. No less important was François de la Noue's *Discours politiques et militaires* (1587), a late sixteenth-century proposal for the education of nobles, in which – along the lines of Castiglione – instruction in mathematics and the art of war was combined with exercises meant to fortify the body and to incorporate the physical grace necessary to a courtier.³² The *Discours* were well-known among the Dutch elite, especially among nobles, courtiers, and regents. So, from the

30 Anna Frank-Van Westrienen, *De Grootte Tour. Tekening van de educatieve reis der Nederlanders in de zeventiende eeuw*, Amsterdam 1983, pp. 230–232.

31 Georges Vigarello, *Le maniement de l'épée. Une technique et une pédagogie du corps au XVI^e siècle*, in: J. Ceard (ed.), *Le corps à la Renaissance: Actes du XXX^e Colloque de Tours 1987*, Paris 1990, pp. 353–355; cf. Karl Gaulhofer, *Die Fußhaltung. Ein Beitrag zur Stilgeschichte der menschlichen Bewegung*, Zeist 1989, pp. 73–106; Mark Modley, *Becoming a French Aristocrat: The Education of the Court Nobility 1580–1715*, Princeton 1990, p. 150.

32 François de la Noue, *Discours politiques et militaires*, hg. von Frank Edmond Sutcliffe (*Textes littéraires français*, 132), Genf 1967.

end of the sixteenth century on, were most of the Italian, French, and Spanish texts on civility, from Castiglione to the Chevalier de Méré and beyond.³³

Christiaan Huygens, the second son of Constantijn Huygens, is an interesting example. Raised, like his elder brother, for a career at court Christiaan became one of the most respected scientists of his day, famed for his work on optics, the planets, and the pendulum clock. His world seem to be a rather scholarly world, far removed from the court or the civil conversation of the *honnête homme*. But, as Steven Shapin argued in his study on civility and science in seventeenth-century England, science was to a remarkable degree a gentlemanly undertaking. The members of the Royal Society, including Christiaan, who joined in 1663, preferred to present themselves not as scholars but rather as free and independent gentlemen, as "disinterested amateurs." This was already Castiglione's view. His courtier was to be more than "passably learned" in all the arts and sciences of his day, but not to have mastered any of them professionally. It was part of his *sprezzatura* and this was precisely how Constantijn Huygens himself, a staunch admirer of Castiglione, had dabbled in science, like Descartes, Mersenne, Galileo, Oldenburg, and Boyle, without ever posing as more than a mere amateur. To dabble in the natural sciences was a highly esteemed and *honnête* pastime. And so was dabbling in the arts. Huygens was also a deserving composer. Similarly, Constantijn Huygens Junior (Christiaan's elder brother) was a more than talented draughtsman, often working together with the painter Jan de Bisschop.

Accordingly, there was a world of difference between the Huygenses and their civil conversation, and, for instance, the draper and microscopist Antoni van Leeuwenhoek who, as Christiaan noted, was "a person unlearned both in sciences and languages," and who communicated his findings to the Royal Society through rough and vulgarly styled letters, thus compromising his credibility.³⁴ Indeed, Leeuwenhoek admitted this himself, writing in his first letter to the Society that he had "no style or pen to express my thoughts," and that he was not raised "in languages or arts, but in trade."³⁵ As Shapin writes, it was exactly the conventions and codes of gentlemanly conversation, this gentle identity, which offered a perfect linguistic seat for the flourishing of seventeenth-century science.

33 See Roodenburg, *Eloquence* (wie Anm. 3), ch. 2.

34 Steven Shapin, *A Social History of Truth: Civility and Science in Seventeenth-Century England*, Chicago/London 1994, pp. 306–307.

35 Quoted in Klaas van Berkel, *Intellectuals against Leeuwenhoek: Controversies about the methods and style of a self-taught scientist*, in: Antoni van Leeuwenhoek 1632–1723: *Studies on the Life and Work of the Delft Scientist Commemorating the 350th Anniversary of his Birthday*, ed. L.C. Palm/H.A.M. Snelder, Amsterdam 1982, pp. 187–209, here p. 188.

The civil conversation among the members of the Royal Society (and one may presume of the Académie des Sciences, which Christiaan joined at its foundation in 1666) exemplifies how the codes of conduct set forth in the civility texts worked. These were both a means of definition and a means of orientation. In construing the "natural" superiority of the gentleman as embodied in his demeanor, deportment, gesture, and conversation, the codes served to define social status and to enforce hierarchy and social exclusion. Obviously, as a representative of the merchant classes, Leeuwenhoek could not claim such superiority. At the same time, the codes provided the gentleman with a valuable language of orientation, a compass to navigate "civil society," to integrate himself successfully into the "civil conversation" of his peers.³⁶

The Grand Tour

While private tutors, dancing, fencing, and riding schools, and colleges and universities offered a first finishing touch, the academies and social circles in Paris and elsewhere provided the final touch, the icing on the cake. "Paris les peut former," as the Dutch ambassador in France wrote to the statesman Johan van Oldenbarnevelt, who had sought his advice as to how his sons might best continue their Grand Tour (they were already in Geneva). The boys should focus on their exercises, on "mathematics, horse-riding, the handling of arms and other functions of the nobility, but above all on conversation, frequenting the court (...) and often visiting the grand." As it turned out, both young men, who sojourned in Paris for more than a year, in 1608 and 1609, favored the tennis court and Antoine de Pluvinel's famous riding academy above their more intellectual exercises.³⁷

Some forty years later, Paris counted numerous such private educational institutions and many others had been started outside the capital, for instance in the towns of Angers, Saumur, and Orléans. They attracted the sons of both the sword and robe nobilities in France, and the sons of German, Dutch, English, or other elites, offering the now widely accepted curriculum of military mathematics, geometry, and fortification, combined with exercises in dancing, music, drawing, fencing, wrestling, tennis, and horsemanship. As the historian Mark Motley notes, from the end of the sixteenth century on, the academies had become "a vector for the code of graceful behavior derived from the Italian Renaissance,"

36 On the contemporary codes of civility as both a means of definition and a means of orientation, see Bryson, *From Courtesy to Civility* (wie Anm. 13), pp. 276–283.

37 Quoted in Frank-Van Westrienen, *De Grootte Tour* (wie Anm. 30), p. 207.

emphasizing in particular "the exhibition of the body as a sign of social status."³⁸ In short, it was all about molding the students' social and physical graces. In Paris they could learn everything, as one of the Dutch parents phrased it, "that may fashion the mind and the body, and enlighten the former through conversation and to develop a good bearing, agility and vigor through the latter."³⁹

It was for such *exercices* that many sons of the Dutch elite, noble and non-noble alike, would visit one of the French academies, though mostly for a shorter period of time. As part of their Grand Tour, they stayed for a couple of months or perhaps a year to travel on to the south of France or to Switzerland and Italy, looking in all the towns they passed by (if they took their tour seriously) for the proper social circles to exercise "la bonne et belle conversation" or, as one of them wrote, "à Hanter les honnestes gens et à aprendre L'Aijr du monde."⁴⁰ It was a largely oral and utterly expensive education, but that was exactly the point. It ensured the exclusivity of graceful movement, the heart of the elites' "inbred" superiority, and the boys' parents were all too aware of this. Indeed, written culture might be acquired by merchants and their children (and let them become professors, if they wish!), but this embodied culture, with its central role for habitual memory and exclusive incorporating practices, was the elites' privilege. It ensured the continuance of their families, and an important part of the role of universities within early modern society was catering to these needs.

38 Motley, *Becoming a French Aristocrat* (wie Anm. 31), pp. 123–124.

39 Quoted in Frank-Van Westrienen, *De Grootte Tour* (wie Anm. 30), p. 216.

40 For the French academies and the Dutch interest, see Frank-Van Westrienen, *De Grootte Tour* (wie Anm. 30), ch. 6; Willem Frijhoff, 'Etudiants étrangers à l'Académie d'Equitation d'Angers au XVIIe siècle', in: *Lias* 4 (1977), pp. 13–84.