

The Military and Dancing

Changing Norms and Behaviour, 15th to 18th Century

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The following study focuses on the history of bodily movements as a category of social action. A twofold comparison is attempted, first between bodily movements in the military and in dancing, second between changes in these movements during the 15th century, on the one side, and, on the other, during the 18th century. The result of the first comparison is that bodily movements, neither in the military nor in dancing, are autonomous; they do not follow some motivation resulting from internal factors in either the military or in dancing; instead, they correlate with forms of behaviour which can be found contemporaneously in other walks of life. The result of the second comparison is that, during the 15th century, an equilibrium position emerged, first in dancing, out of which many different movements could be performed; in the 18th century, this equilibrium position was given up, first in the military, in favour of a position which forced the individual into a dynamic flexibility of the body and into a tension; through its release, the tension enhanced movements. Again, this change can be traced in many contemporaneous aspects of 18th-century European culture.

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According to Clausewitz's (1832: 236) conception of warfare, the political consequences of military campaigning can only be of lasting effect under the condition that a "tension" permeates the entire armed forces of a "nation", embracing combatants of all ranks. Thus Clausewitz postulated the existence of a uniformity of social action within the armed forces as a *conditio sine qua non* for lasting success in warfare, and, further to this, he believed that each "nation" represents a quasi living body politic into which the actions of all individual members of that "nation", combatants and non-combatants alike, have to be coordinated if one "nation" is to succeed in its struggle with rival "nations". Because action as normative behaviour includes bodily movements, Clausewitz also assumed that bodily movements are typical not only for the armed forces of a "nation", but also of the "nation" as a whole. However, this assumption is far from obvious, because it is well known that, only since the 19th century, it has become customary to perceive variations

of bodily movements as specific elements of "national" behaviour and to discredit as obsolete and inefficient the previous custom of associating bodily movements with social groups rather than groups of the subjects of a single ruler.¹

Therefore, the following questions must be asked, first, which changes occurred in military movements that could induce Clausewitz to formulate his assumption, second, what the age of those types of military movements was which were abandoned at the beginning of the 19th century, third, which groups were affected by the changes of military movements, and, fourth, how military movements are related to other forms of social action in different walks of life. The method for the answering of these questions shall be that of comparison. First, changes in military movements during the second half of the 15th century shall be compared with similar changes in dancing at the same time; the purpose of this comparison shall be the analysis of the coming into existence of a type of bodily

movements which, in the military as well as in dancing, were designed for the maintenance of a stable equilibrium of the body. Second, an analogous comparison shall be carried out between military movements and dancing at the end of the 18th century; the purpose of this second comparison shall be the analysis of the coming into existence of another type of bodily movements which, in the military as well as in dancing, were designed for the accomplishment of dynamic flexibility of the body.

Changes in military movements during the second half of the 15th century

Throughout the high and late Middle Ages, military movements were, as a rule, conducted for the purpose of accomplishing direct interactions along a straight line which interconnected opposed combatants. This rule applied to the dual combat of the knights as well as to the matches of the bourgeois fencers. In both kinds of combat, the opponents tried to thrust their weapons upon each other in attempts to test which of both had to give way.² The rule also applied to battle tactics, which, still at the end of the 15th century, were conceived, for example by the Swiss, as engagements between two formations pushing against each other.³ These tactics enforced the use of pikes and swords as offensive weapons. Conversely, they limited the use of projectiles (except for the special cases of the English longbowmen, the Genovese crossbowmen and the Aragonese⁴) and, specifically, retarded the deployment of firearms.⁵ In this type of combat, the space surrounding the combatants was not of tactical significance in itself; for movements which deviated from a straight line were either forbidden, as in the tournaments, or were not part of battle tactics at all. Instead, space was only used for allowing each combatant to accomplish his goal, namely to attack, hit and beat his opponent swiftly and directly.

This type of combat underwent a thorough change through the lansquenets of Roman King, Emperor Elect and Roman Emperor Maximilian I (1459–1519). The hallmark of the lansquenets was no longer a custom of fighting along a straight line, but they preferred a circle-

wise movement which enabled them to attack their opponents from many different angles. An early piece of evidence for this novel fighting technique of the lansquenets was provided by Jean Molinet in his report on Maximilian's arrest in the city of Bruges in January 1488. Molinet reports that, on some occasion, Count Eitelfriedrich I, a youth friend of Maximilian's, was present in the centre of the city, waiting for Maximilian with a band of lansquenets in Saint-Domas square. Molinet writes that Eitelfriedrich wanted to prevent his lansquenets from the idleness of waiting in the square and commanded them to train themselves for fighting; Eitelfriedrich is made to have ordered his lansquenets to form "the snail" [*limachon*] according to the "way of the Germans". Immediately, Molinet says, the lansquenets arrayed themselves in ranks and files, four by four, and marched circlewise across the square, drifting slowly to the outside while marching. Suddenly, Eitelfriedrich shouted a command: "Everybody fell his pike!", and the command was carried out instantaneously. But, Molinet goes on, the citizens of Bruges, watching the show, misunderstood the formation of the "snail": Instead of regarding the formation as an instrument of training and as a piece of show, they mistook it as an attack by the lansquenets on the city, screamed and tried to flee the place or hide in their homes. Hearing the noise, Maximilian came to the square and tried to calm down the citizens. But he failed and was arrested by the city authorities for misconduct and breach of peace (Molinet 1828: 207–208).⁶

In the context of this study, it is not necessary to inquire about the truth of Molinet's assertion that Maximilian was arrested in Bruges because of the misconduct of his lansquenets. For, even if Molinet was wrong in assuming this to have been the case, his report still contains the valuable information that, to the citizens of Bruges in 1488, the formation of the "snail" was something new, which they did not understand, whereas, for the lansquenets themselves, it was then already current practice. This was so, because two commands by their band leader Eitelfriedrich sufficed to make the lansquenets do what was expected of them. Molinet's report also discloses an image of violence and war-

proneness attached to the lansquenets at that time.

The novelty of the formation of the “snail” is underlined by the fact that Molinet’s report is one of the earliest literary references to this formation. Not only Molinet’s own word *limachon* was new at the time, but also other vernacular renderings of the Latin *testudo*, namely Middle English *snayle* and Middle High German *schnegge* were uncommon at the time of Molinet’s report. Up to the end of the 15th century, *testudo* and its vernacular variants had been used, for instance in the Latin and vernacular editions of Vegetius, for the description of a machine in siege warfare. In this context, *testudo* had denoted an armed covered cart in the shape of a turtle and equipped with a pestle that could ram holes into stone walls (Vegetius 1885: IV/14; Hohenwang 1477: fol. 63r; Knyghthode 1935: vv 2371, 2379, 2385). In the beginning of the 16th century, the word *testudo* and its vernacular variants changed their meanings from a technical instrument in siege warfare to a training formation for fighting bands; and this change always occurred in connection with the reception of the lansquenet type of combat.⁷ Thus, the process of the change of the meaning of *testudo* and its vernacular variants shows that the circlewise formation of the “snail” as described by Molinet emerged as the hallmark of the lansquenet type of combat.

What was novel about the formation of the “snail” was the circlewise movement of the lansquenets in a training formation. They practiced this formation under the command of their band leaders in preparation for battle, but not in the battle itself. Thus, from its very inception, the formation of the “snail” displayed the willingness of the lansquenets to abandon the medieval convention of fighting along a straight line. Instead, for their training formation and their combat actions, they tried to employ the space surrounding them in the battle field and elsewhere, and they made efforts to increase the movability of their bodies. In this way, the lansquenets could employ the physical strength of their bodies for the purpose of pushing against their opponents into many directions and, ultimately achieved a tactical advantage over the Swiss who retained their knightly



Fig. 1. From Hans Talhoffer’s fencing manual (Illuminated manuscript, Vienna, Kunstmuseum, Waffensammlung, also referred to as the Ambras Codex), early 15th century. Two men fight with pikes. They push the pikes against each other. The turning point is in the upper part of their bodies.

way of fighting along straight lines well into the 16th century.

Correspondingly, the pictorial representation of individual warriors differed fundamentally between the late 15th-century depictions of Swiss fighting forces and 16th-century lansquenets. In the Swiss pictorial chronicles, the Swiss warriors are shown to march by equal step in large and densely packed formations, as they keep the upper parts of their bodies slightly inclined to the front. The turning point of their bodies is relatively high, namely in the upper part of their bodies, and when a warrior’s leg is shown to be stretched out to the back, it forms almost a straight line with the upper part of the body of the same warrior. The same type of postures is depicted in the 15th-century fencing manuals (Hergsell 1889, plates 88, 89; Schilling 1943/5: 635)⁸ [Fig. 1].

By contrast, early 16th-century depictions of lansquenets display warriors who, as shown by Hans Holbein the Younger (1497–1543)⁹, thrust their weapons into many different direction from out of a firm and stable stand on the ground; they have both legs placed wide apart from each other, keep the upper parts of their bodies upright, so that a warrior’s leg stretched out to the back and the upper part of his body do not form a straight line; also, the turning point of their bodies is rather low, in the hip zone [Fig.

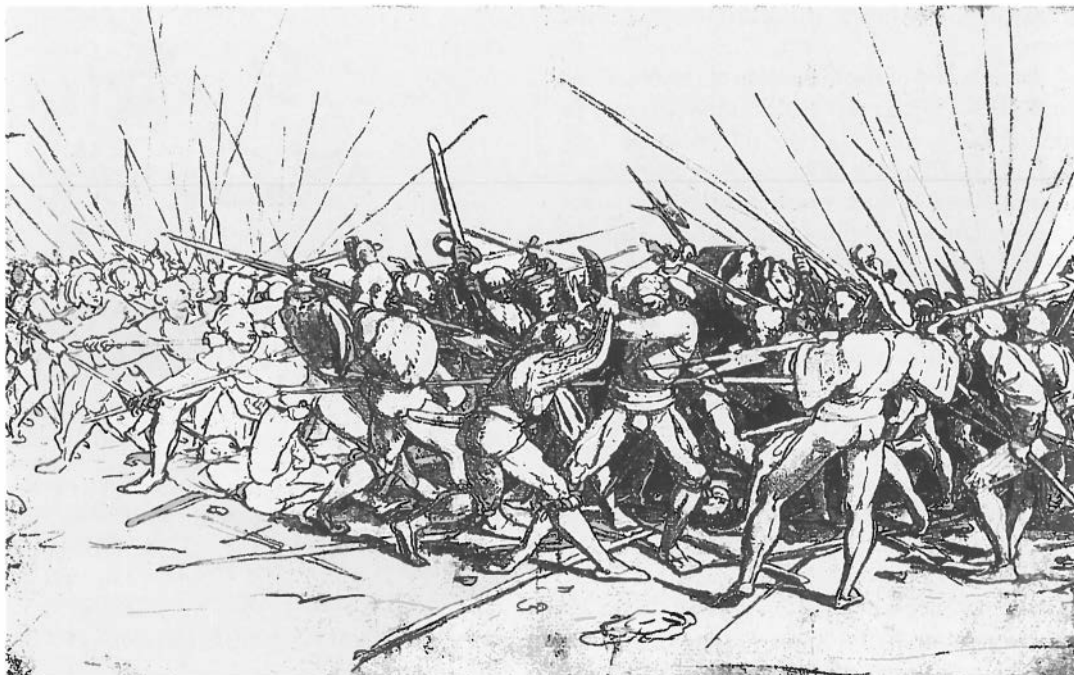


Fig. 2. Hans Holbein the Younger: The Lansquenets' Battle (drawing, Basel, Öffentliche Kunstsammlung), ca 1530. A sequence of dual combats is shown with men thrusting their halberds and battle axes against enemies in many different directions. The turning point is in the hip zone of their bodies.

2]. Holbein also depicted the battle scene as a sequence of dual combats, no more than loosely coordinated. In these dual combats, the lansquenets make ample use of the space available to them and fully rely on their individual physical strength in battle action. Hence, in battle action, the lansquenets were accustomed to breaking apart their formations into dual combats sooner than it had been the practice of the Swiss.

These new types of combat initiated by the lansquenets can be understood as the results of the preference given to circlewise movements over movements along a straight line. The new types of combat demanded efforts for the maintenance of a stable equilibrium under the condition of rapid and energetic movements and pushes into many directions. Their equilibrium-oriented behaviour enabled the lansquenets to combine the goal of the high movability of their bodies with the demand of maintaining a firm stand against their opponents in dual combats. The conditions were, first, that the lansquenets were allowed to rely on and employ the physical

energies contained in their bodies; second, that they could make ample use of the space within which their fighting actions were to take place; and, third, that they kept themselves fit for battle action and trained themselves for the purpose of increasing the movability of their bodies¹⁰ [Fig. 3].

Changes in dancing during the second half of the 15th century

In medieval dancing, the movements of the head and of the arms played a significantly deictic part in determining the meaning of gestures of expression; hence they appear to have been carefully and purposefully chosen. By contrast, determining the steps and the movements of the feet seem to have been left to the individual dancers¹¹ [Fig. 4].

However, by the beginning of the 15th century at the latest, more regularizing attention seems to have been awarded to the steps and the movements of the feet, whereas the importance of the movements of arms declined. For

Fig. 3. From Christian Egenolph's fencing manual (book illustration, printed at Franckfurt) 1558. The printer Egenolph may have used older drawings, possibly from Dürer's workshop. Two men fight with pikes. They push the pikes against each other. The turning point is in the hip zone of their bodies.



example, crossing one's legs while stepping forward became the expression of aristocratic behaviour¹²; and a number of dancing steps (*simple*, *double*, *piva*, *saltarello*, *ripessa*, *contrapasso*, *movimento*, *volta*, and others) became prescribed for dancers who were to enact them in groups. Further to this, in the 15th century, members of groups of dancers were expected to move to and from each other, encircling one another or weaving in and out of geometrical patterns of choreographies. Specifically, this was the case in one variant of a *bassa danza* named *Verceppe*, which was described by dancing master Antonio Cornazano of Piacenza (ca 1429 – ca 1484)¹³ in the following way: *Verceppe* is a dance similar to a skirmish [*scaramuccia*]. Dancers form groups of five, two ladies and three gentlemen. The ladies stand in the centre, the gentlemen stand around them. In this arrangement, they perform a *saltarello*, all at the same time, and then they stop their movements. Then the first and the last gentlemen begin to encircle the ladies in such a way that they begin on their left feet and enact two *doubles* (Cornazano 1916: 18–20).

Cornazano's choreography describes a dance performed in geometrical patterns including circlewise movements, such as turns. On the one side, the dancing master had the task of composing the dance in advance, as if it were a piece of music; on the other side, the dancers had the obligation of practicing the dance under

the supervision of the dancing master and follow the prescribed choreography. The earliest references for such dancing masters come from the 15th century.¹⁴

In sum, 15th-century dances display measures for the training of dancers who need to acquaint themselves with the choreographics of professional dancing masters. The arrangements emphasize circlewise movements of dancers according to geometrical patterns, thereby awarding a higher importance to the space which the dancers use for the enactment of their movements. For want of contemporary normative sources, it is impossible to ascribe characteristics of normative behaviour to these types of bodily movements; however, the parallelism of the novel bodily movements in dancing in the earlier 15th century with the novel bodily movements in the military at the end of the 15th century seems to suggest that the innovations in either walks of life were more than merely contingent.

Pictures of the new dances followed suit in displaying formations of dancers, all of whom are depicted in a stable equilibrium position, from out of which they can perform circlewise movements.¹⁵ Among others, in an early 16th-century woodcut ascribed to Dürer (1471–1528) (1970: 1443) [Fig. 5], three women and three men are dancing in a circle, moving by different kinds of step after the music. One dancer, who is placed in the foreground of the picture, stretch-

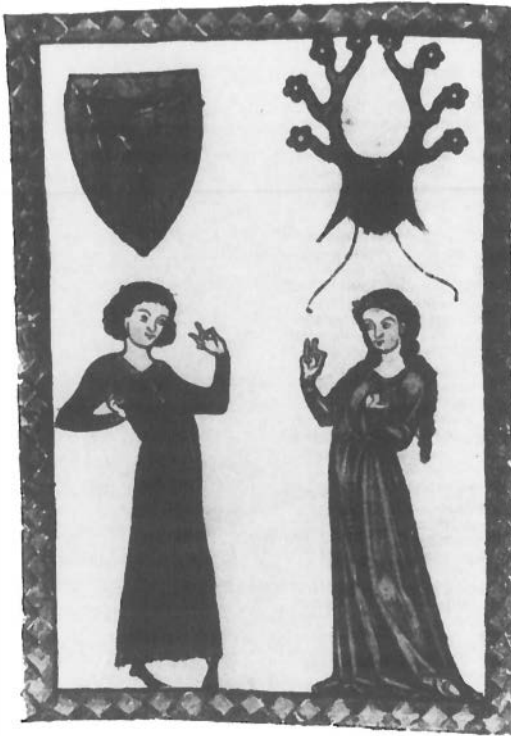


Fig. 4. From the Manesse manuscript (Heidelberg University Library), early 14th century. A man and a woman dancing. They move their arms as if gesticulating. Their hands are in deictic positions.

es his leg out behind himself and keeps the upper part of his body upright. The turning point of his body is relatively low in the hip zone, and the leg stretched out to the back and the upper part of his body do not form a straight line. This is exactly the same type of position as the one in which the lansquenets were depicted at the same time.¹⁶

Comparison between movements in the military and in dancing

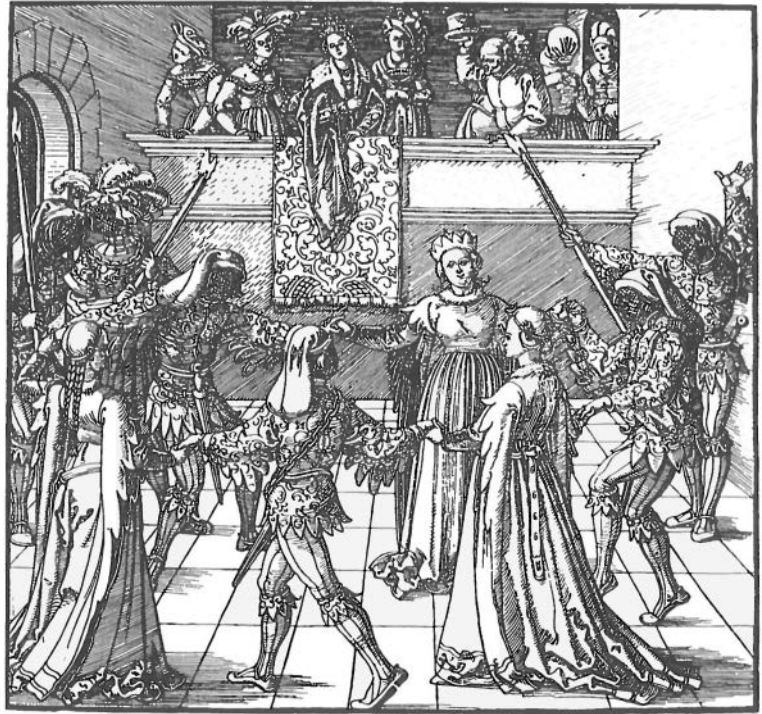
Parallelisms between novel movements in the military and in dancing become explicit in the equation by Cornazano of the *Verceppe* with the *scaramuccia*.¹⁷ By this equation, Cornazano displays himself as an author knowledgeable in dancing as well as in military matters.¹⁸ In fact, Cornazano was in the services of the Sforza, of the Este and of Bartolomeo Colleoni and authored a number of works on military theory.¹⁹

In these works, Cornazano commented on the Roman military tradition, using mainly Vegetius, whose canon of military exercises he recommended (1493: fol. Iv). Cornazano was thus a conservative as a military author, but could nevertheless be innovative as the author of a dancing manual. The same combination of dancing and military expertise can be observed, at the practical level, about Maximilian I. He did not only support the lansquenets type of combat, but also introduced circlemwise movements into the tournaments²⁰ and in fencing²¹, as he was an active dancer following the new style.²² In all these respects, Maximilian preferred stable equilibrium positions and circlemwise movements.

The comparison of military and dancing movements as actions leads to the first observation that both types of movements were not perceived to be as far apart as it may appear from a 20th-century perspective. Moreover, similar types of changes in bodily movements occurred in the military as well as in dancing. In both cases, two types of movements competed during the 15th century: The traditional type was performed along straight lines and as an action the purpose of which it was to allow one individual to interact swiftly with another individual; the new type was enacted as a circlemwise movement or a movement according to geometrical patterns and as an action the purpose of which it was to enable an individual to make use of the space around itself and to conduct movements and pushes energetically into many different directions from out of a stable equilibrium position. A closer look at the emergence of the new type of movement reveals that the innovation occurred in dancing about two generations earlier than in the military.²³

Hence it may be concluded that, during the 15th century, the courtly festivals resembled a playground for innovations, anticipating early on what was to become daily practice in the military only at the end of the century. As far as the military was concerned, however, the innovations did not before the beginning of the 16th century become dominant over the traditions of the high and late Middle Ages. Instead, Maximilian and his aristocratic lansquenet band leaders had to fight uphill, as it were. Still at the

Fig. 5. The Augsburg Torch Dance (printed broadsheet, ascribed to Dürer), early 16th century. Men and women enact circlewise movements. The turning point is in the hip zone of their bodies.



very end of the 15th century, the new type of combat, which they favoured, proved unsuccessful in battles against the then still dominant Swiss.²⁴ Therefore, Maximilian must have been eager to introduce the new type of circlewise movements and the stable equilibrium position against the opposing pressures of his own time and even under the impression of defeat in battle. In his own time, Maximilian could no more than hope that the new forms of action would eventually succeed; in fact, however, they became dominant soon after his death in 1519.²⁵

Changes in military movements during the 18th century

The stable equilibrium position was retained throughout the 17th century, although a stiff element began to dominate movements.²⁶ This element is recognizable in military movements, sports and dancing, where warriors, sportsmen and dancers began to keep stiff all those parts of their bodies which were not essential to the performance of movements. As drill manuals²⁷

show, by the end of the 17th century, this stiff element had been accepted in the armed forces of all European states as well as in the British colonial army in North America.

These drill manuals were commissioned alike by continental absolutist rulers, private commanders of army regiments, the captains of the Free and Imperial Cities as well as by commanders in the British armies. They all agreed that it should be the purpose of military exercises to “form” a ruler’s subjects into “blindly obedient soldiers” (Dietrich 1981: 229). It was then understood that this goal was to be accomplished by way of training the peasants to accept and perform specific new positions and bodily movements and that, through the specificity of these positions and movements, the soldiers were to obtain a distinguished “bon air”. The soldiers were to hold their heads upright and motionless, keep their eyes open and look straightforwardly into the eyes of their counterparts; the soldiers were to stand stiffly on their feet and were to march with their knees stretched out straight and with their heads turned above their right shoulders; and

they were to keep their bodies upright (Reglement for the Prussian Infantry 1743: II/2,7; Reglement for the Prussian Infantry 1726: II/2,6; II/2,13; II/2,19).

In contrast with the stable equilibrium positions of the 16th century, in the late 17th- and 18th-century positions and bodily movements, the equilibrium was used for the twofold purpose, first, of keeping the soldiers' bodies tight and upright and of constraining their movements, and, second, of making them enact all commanded movements promptly and swiftly. Instead of training their bodies for physical strength and making them concentrate themselves on their arms and legs, the soldiers were to focus their attention on the meticulous enactment of given orders (Reglement for the Prussian Infantry 1726: II/2,19), on keeping their spines straight and motionless (Reglement for the Prussian Infantry 1726: II/2,8), and performing movements briskly and strictly by command only (Reglement for the Prussian Infantry 1726: II/2,12).

These positions and movements stood in exact opposition against the sturdy peasant behaviour with its loose, flexible, but occasionally wild movements. Therefore, constraining the flexibility of movements implied their control by a superior agency as well as by the moving soldiers themselves (Reglement for the Prussian Infantry 1743: XI/3,7).

These principles of manual drill, namely keeping the body upright and tight, stretching his limbs and keeping them stiff, and moving by command only and then briskly, appeared most clearly in the Prussian drill manuals issued under Frederick William I and Frederick II. Yet they were not a Prussian invention; instead, they can be found already in late 17th-century French drill manuals.²⁸ Drilling soldiers for "blind obedience" was necessary, because, in the complex battle tactics of the later 17th and the 18th centuries, the common soldiers were expected to execute commands without reasoning, although they themselves were frequently unable to understand the commands given to them. Moreover, reasoning which was endemic among the peasant populations²⁹ was then intolerable in the armies because it would have impeded the prompt execution of the com-

mands.³⁰ Finally, most armies were made up from motley bands of pressed or conscribed men whose personal conduct left much to be desired.

When successful, the drill produced soldiers who were ready to subordinate themselves to the discipline of the corps, to act by command only and, when moving, distinguish visibly between moving and motionless parts of their bodies. Thus the outward impression which the soldiers gave of their professional behaviour was that of a natural, living machine. Indeed, specifically the Prussian army and its soldiers were compared with a well ordered machine already in the 18th century.³¹ Hence, linear tactics and the kind of drill it demanded were compatible with the mechanistic principles guiding the Enlightenment.³²

However, linear tactics began to be subjected to criticism under the impression of the Seven Years' War (1756–1763). Already in 1761, an English military theorist criticized the Prussian military practice and, particularly, its application in the British armed forces. He argued that Prussian drill was an exaggeration, even if it was based on sound reason and good for the maintenance of discipline, and that, if the soldiers ought to stand still, they should do so without constraint (Dalrymple 1761: 67). Indeed, during the Seven Years' War, Prussian drill had been popular in Britain, although, in detail, Prussian rules for military movements were not identical with those prescribed in the official drill manuals for the British armed forces.³³ Dalrymple argued against what he perceived as the unnatural Prussian habit of using the soldiers' bodily energy for the purpose of keeping their bodies motionless and tight. Instead, in Dalrymple's view, it was rational to allow the soldiers to move their bodies "naturally" and without constraint.

Dalrymple's criticism marks the beginning of a movement against linear tactics and the behavioural rules stipulated by it. Since then, critics began to argue that, instead of focusing bodily energies onto motionlessness and stiffness, it made more sense to direct the soldiers' activity to what the critics assumed to be battle-relevant action. In other words, critics of linear tactics maintained that the kind of drill which was exemplified by the Prussian rules had little

or no connection any longer with battle action; instead, they insisted, military drill should pay respect to the true “nature” of the soldiers in order to allow them to act appropriately in battle. In sum, critics of the linear tactics placed their conception of “nature” against the machine and, thereby, denied the previous conviction that the machine was natural. Hence, since the 1760s, nature and the machine had become incompatible.

What was the difference? Jacques Antoine Hippolyte de Guibert (1743–1790), perhaps the leading prerevolutionary critic of the armed forces of the *Ancien Régime*, observed the following about the position without arms:

“Whenever the soldier is in this position, he shall stand motionless and shall observe strict silence. However, he shall not stand like a lifeless machine, but shall rather resemble an animated picture, which can begin to work and move at any moment” (Guibert 1774: 165).

Thus Guibert associated the machine with motionlessness, which was no longer worth a consideration. He did no longer want the soldiers to observe a static and tight position while standing; instead, he understood the standing positions as the preparatories for subsequent movements. Against the prescriptions of the earlier 18th century, Guibert emphasized the movability of the soldiers’ bodies and believed that it was “natural” to interconnect the standing positions with the movements that were to follow them (Guibert 1774: 73–76).

Because Guibert rejected the previous fusion of nature and the machine, he was compelled to indicate his own criteria for the “naturalness” of behaviour. On the occasion of his command for marching, he explained:

“I have paid keen attention to the fact that every class of human beings, every nation has its own way of walking as it has its own physiognomy. ... But, in one single respect of the mechanism of walking, all human beings agree. Namely, all human beings move their bodies forward while stepping ahead; among all human beings, the weight of the body alternatingly rests on the leg which stands on the ground,

and all human beings lift up their opposite foot for the second step, after they have placed this leg on the ground. In this respect, my basic principles of the drill step are correct and compatible with nature” (Guibert 1774: 183–184).

According to Guibert, a drill rule was “correct”, if it was compatible with “nature”, and compatibility with “nature” did not result from abidance by pre-existent orders, but was to be gleaned from empirical observations of what was common to all mankind. Hence, to Guibert, “nature” was no longer the order of things in the world, but the common property of mankind. Hence, to him, movements were “natural” when they could be shown to be performed by all human beings. Consequently, and because human beings do not usually constrain their movements, Guibert was compelled to delete from drill all rules the goal of which was to restrict the movability of the soldiers. Instead, movability had become the main goal of military exercises, and the soldier had been transformed from a “lifeless machine” into a dynamic instrument of warfare.

These attitudes brought Guibert into opposition against linear tactics. He questioned the principles guiding conventional 18th-century warfare and rejected them when he could not find an empirical foundation for them, but only the desire for the preservation of existing habits and, beyond that, the status quo in general. Guibert rode an attack on the then still dominant Prussian tactics and argued that Prussian tactics were no more than the fixed rules of “slavish” game, in which everyone will succeed who abides by the rules meticulously (Guibert 1780: 124). With this attack, he disclosed a major weakness of the Prussian tactics, namely that the artfully balanced house of cards³⁴, which it represented, would collapse at once, if only one player refused to accept the rules of the war game. It becomes immediately evident that Guibert theoretically anticipated Napoleonic strategies.³⁵

Guibert’s ideas were fully utilized for the compilation of the drill manual for the troops of the French revolutionary army of 1791. In this manual, a rule for the position of the soldiers without arms was prescribed which followed

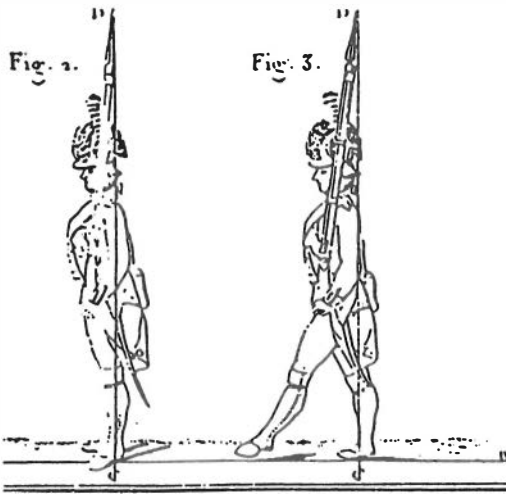


Fig. 6. From the French drill manual of 1791 (book illustration, printed in Paris by government command). “Fig. 2” shows a soldier in the position standing under arms, slightly leaning to the front. “Fig. 3” shows a soldier marching; his body is upright.

the one suggested by Guibert. But the drill manual of 1791 went far beyond Guibert in that it did not only abandon the stiffness of the position of the body, but, further to this, ruled that, while standing, the soldiers should lean the upper parts of their bodies slightly to the front (Reglement for the French Troops 1791: II) [Fig. 6]. This rule was connected with what was prescribed for marching:

“To the front! March! Upon the first command, the full weight of the body shall rest on the right foot. Upon the second command, the left foot is lifted swiftly, but without shaking, is brought forward two feet ahead of the right, the knee is in tension, the tiptoes are slightly turned towards the ground and twisted slightly towards the outside, together with the knee. At the same time, the body is pushed forward, and the foot is placed on the ground flatly and smoothly at the very distance at which it is from the right foot. Hence the weight of the body must always rest on the foot that stands on the ground. Immediately, the right leg is pulled ahead swiftly, but without shaking, with the tiptoe stroking the ground without touching it” (Reglement for the French Troops 1791: 17–19).

The tension of the march was to result from the forward inclination of the upper part of the soldiers’ bodies during the standing position. In this position, the soldiers were forced to use their energy for keeping themselves upright until they could release this energy into forward movements. Thus the tension produced by the forward inclination of the standing position made soldiers desire to march swiftly, lest they fell down on the ground. To this tension, a further accelerating factor was added which was to result from the stretching towards the ground of the knees and tiptoes. Together, the combined effects of the forward inclination and of the downward stretching of the knees and tiptoes increased, first, the speed with which steps could succeed each other, and, second, the distance covered by the steps. In sum, as Guibert, the French drill manual of 1791 took standing positions to be the preparatories for marching; but it went beyond Guibert in prescribing rules, in consequence of which the soldiers were in a tension which compelled them to employ their bodily energy for the purpose of gaining more ground more swiftly.

On the basis of these rules, the mass armies levied since 1793 were drilled, so that the drill manual of 1791 could become the tactical basis for Napoleonic strategies. It remained in effect until 1830 and was quickly applied in modifications in Italy and England already by 1800. In the German speaking areas, the earliest applications of the French drill manual of 1791 appeared in the Austrian Imperial army in 1806, whereas the Prussian army received its first French inspired drill book only in 1812.³⁶ At the latest at this point of time, linear tactics, which had been founded on conformity and static behaviour, had been replaced by the dynamics and desire for originality so characteristic of 19th-century military practice.³⁷ Henceforth, bodily movements came to be regarded as dynamic actions.

Changes in 18th-century dancing

By far the most important 18th-century courtly dance was the minuet, which contained the expression of well-orderedness already in its name.³⁸ But the agreements between the minu-

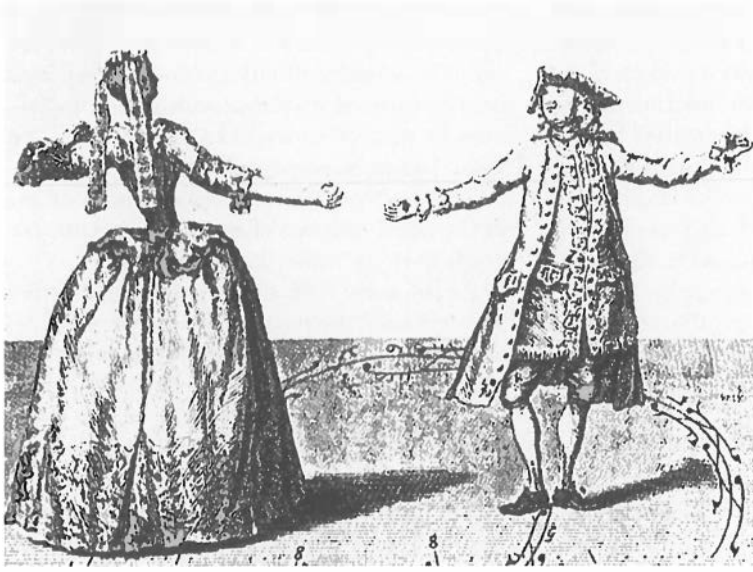


Fig. 7. Arnold Vanhaeckken, *The Minuet* (engraving), 1735. A man and a woman enact circlewise movements. Their bodies are upright and kept in a tight position.

et and military movements were not limited to formalities; instead, they concerned many different details of rules for positions and movements. For example, in 1717, Gottfried Taubert, a German dancing master, prescribed rules for dancers according to which they should adopt a well-ordered position in which a stable equilibrium is always to be preserved; dancers were expected to keep their bodies tight and upright and their knees stiff (Taubert 1717: 411–412, 418); they were to constrain their movements while stepping forward (Taubert 1717: 421). In detail, Taubert ruled that dancers had to stretch their knees and tiptoes while moving forward and stiffen all parts of their bodies that were not required for the purpose of moving (Taubert 1717: 422–423). Instead, dancers had to keep their bodies upright and in a stable equilibrium [Fig. 7].

Taubert believed that the well-ordered and constrained movability of the body was an expression of the “naturalness” of dancing. By contrast, Taubert regarded such movements as unnatural or “affected” which were disorderly, indecorous and exaggerated through an overextension of muscles (Taubert 1717: 411–412, 421). In Taubert’s conception of dancing movements, order and a stable condition did not stand against, but were indicative of “naturalness”, in

the same way as in the early 18th-century military movements³⁹ the machine did not stand against “nature”.

Such behavioural norms reflected the world of the courts with the aristocracy as the ruling elite which was closely tied together in a system of Europe-wide kin affiliations and social interrelations. Hence the behavioural norms expressed in the minuet were constitutive for the courtly elite which, for itself could sanction deviations from or even disregard for these norms. But, throughout most of the 18th century, the attitude toward these norms among the peasants was distant and rejective, whereas the bourgeois attitudes were mixed. Those members of the bourgeoisie who wanted to assimilate themselves to or compete with the aristocracy tried to imitate the norms of courtly behaviour, while the critics of the aristocracy expressed their criticism through attempts at the establishment of novel behavioural norms.

Such indecision can be traced in the works of two mid-18th-century men of arts, those by William Hogarth (1697–1764), English painter and art theorist, and those by Jean Georges Noverre (1727–1810), Swiss-born dancing master, choreographer and ballet theorist. In 1753, Hogarth described the minuet step as a common “inundating movement” in the course of

which the bodies of the dancers move up and down while stepping forward (Hogarth 1955: 157). The minuet step was thus a step on high heels, which conditioned the “inundating movement”. The latter was in turn intensified by the stretching of the knees and the tiptoes as prescribed by Taubert and repeated by Hogarth in his pictorial works.⁴⁰ Hogarth approved such kinds of steps as an expression of beauty and placed them in opposition against two unbecoming types of movement, on the one side, those of peasants which he described as disorderly and wild, and, on the other, those of the dancing masters whose tight and upright positions he brandmarked as ludicrous (Hogarth 1986: 97). Thus, Hogarth knew two kinds of deviations from his own aesthetic ideal of movement as represented in the minuet, first, the boorish ignorance of aristocratic behavioural norms, and, second, the purposeful rejection of some of these norms (Hogarth 1986: 127–135).⁴¹

Similar observations can be gleaned from Noverre’s theoretical letters on the art of dancing and on the ballets, first published in 1760. As a man of bourgeois origin, Noverre composed ballets for an aristocratic audience⁴², usually at the demand of territorial rulers.

In his letters, Noverre once described the bodily movements of dancers as the movement of a machine:

“According to my opinion, nothing is more difficult than to hide our own mistakes, particularly in those moments when, through some intense execution, the whole machine is moving and in a continuous vibration and when it sacrifices itself to unnatural movements and incessant strains. If, in these moments, art can overcome nature, the dancer deserves every praise!” (Noverre 1981: 226).

Noverre’s image of the machine was similar to that of Guibert’s, namely an instrument for the facilitation of quick and intense movements, such as jumps or lifts of other dancers. But such movements posed a problem. The problem was that dancers had to exhibit slow actions, when quick movements were required, and they had to preserve the visible impression of an equilibrium when intense and destabilizing movements

were to be performed. In order to combine their quick and intense movements with the impression of balanced positions and slow actions, dancers were in need of a stable position of steadiness, in which they could keep their bodies upright. Hence Noverre still demanded the 18th-century constrained stable equilibrium positions in the novel contexts of rapid movements (Noverre 1981: 247–248, 258–259).

As the early 18th-century dancing masters, Noverre used the position of a stable equilibrium for the purposes of accomplishing controlled and constrained movements and of reducing tensions, as he gave preference to the use of bodily energy for the purpose of keeping the body and its limbs tight, upright and stiff.

The 19th-century reception of Noverre’s works supports the assumption that his rules for positions and movements became the standard of what has since been referred to as the classical ballet. However, what was, in the 18th century, an expression of contemporary behavioural norms, has remained a mere reminiscence since the 19th century. This has been so, because, soon after the publication of Noverre’s letters, the waltz as a new type of dance became popular, first in the bourgeois communities of towns and cities of the later 18th century. The waltz followed other rules. Its hallmark were swift turns through which the dancers received a tension allowing them fast movements with flexible bodies. The waltz had been representative of the kind of country dances which Hogarth had abhorred. But, already in 1774, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe described the waltz as a fashionable dance which he highly appreciated. According to Goethe, it was a pleasure to dance the waltz because of the tensions it created (Goethe 1774: 22–25).⁴³ Goethe’s reference to the waltz is of interest because it shows that, at the time when Noverre created his equilibrium-oriented ballet dances for aristocratic audiences, the upper bourgeoisie had already adopted a new type of bodily movement, which was no longer equilibrium-oriented, but was based on periodical changes between tension and fast movements on the one side, relaxation and rest on the other.⁴⁴

In sum, during the later years of the 18th century, conventional behavioural norms com-

peted with innovative ones, whereby the aristocracy adhered to the conventionalisms and the upper bourgeoisie preferred the innovations. The conventional behavioural norms were drawn on positions of a stable equilibrium, the innovative ones focused on the flexibility and dynamic movability of the body. Since the beginning of the 19th century, the conventionalisms have survived only in the classical ballet.

Comparison between bodily movements in the military and dancing

A thorough change took place in military bodily movements during the second half of the 18th century. The equilibrium position, which had emerged during the 15th century and had been transformed into a tight position of a stable equilibrium during the 17th century, was given up in favour of a dynamic type of movement resulting from tensions in the soldiers' bodies. The change began during the Seven Years' War and sparked off a radical criticism of the then valid norms underlying linear tactics. Initially, critics articulated their views merely in works on military theory, but, already during the 1770s, novel rules for movements appeared in printed drill manuals, although then featuring conspicuously only in Steuben's manual for the troops of the Continental Congress in North America. However, since the 1790s, a radical transformation of the rules for military movements occurred, in the course of which, by the first decade of the 19th century, the conventional behavioural norms were either abandoned completely or thoroughly called into question.

The late 18th-century change of military movements is remarkable because it was carried out by military officers who belonged to the aristocracy or were nobilitated bourgeois.⁴⁵ Hence the change reflected more than the political demands and wishes of the late 18th-century bourgeoisie, but represented changes of patterns of actions which resulted from initiatives of the aristocracy which dominated the officer corps in the armed forces of the late 18th-century states. The reform-demanding aristocratic officers defended their demands, not with aesthetic or emotional motives, but with arguments on the efficiency of military action.

By contrast, the preference for dynamic type of movements in dancing was initially confined to members of the upper bourgeoisie, who devised new behavioural norms in opposition against the aristocracy. During the 18th century, the resulting novel types of movement, represented in the waltz, remained confined to the bourgeoisie, whereas the aristocracy retained the conventional 18th-century dancing movements, represented in the courtly minuet.⁴⁶ Although the new type of movements spread into bourgeois sports already before the end of the 18th century, the conventional type of movement has been retained in the form of the classical ballet well beyond the 19th century. Consequently, the change in dancing movements was gradual and partial, whereas, in military movements, it was rapid and total. Nevertheless, in both processes of change, the gross result was the same. In both cases, a new type of bodily movements from out of a dynamic alternation of periods of tensions with periods of relaxation was superimposed upon a conventional type of bodily movements from out of tight positions of a stable equilibrium.

Juxtaposition of the changes in bodily movements of the 15th and the 18th centuries and some remarks on the importance of military history for social and cultural history

In the previous six chapters, two processes of change have been investigated and compared touching upon aspects of culture which, at first sight, may not at present be regarded as closely related. Specifically, the military and dancing have been searched for behavioural norms relevant to movements as actions. Investigating movements in the military and in dancing has given support to the assertion that military movements are not autonomous and do not result from some specifically military rationality.⁴⁷ *Mutatis mutandis*, the same is true for dancing movements; also in dancing, behavioural norms do not follow from internal factors, such as aesthetic or emotional motivations.⁴⁸

Instead, the comparison between bodily movements in the military and in dancing has produced evidence which suffices to show that,

in both cases, movements as a form of social action were subjected to wider behavioural norms which are definable in terms of space and time, as it were, as parts and parcel of specific "spaces of communication".⁴⁹ However, the comparison does not only produce similarities, but it also displays differences. One difference concerns the relative chronology of the changes, the other refers to the effects of the changes on groups.

During the 15th century, changes of military movements followed changes of dancing movements after about two generations. In both forms of social action, the changes were total in that no residuals on conventionality were left beyond the first half of the 16th century. Moreover, changes in both forms of social action originated among the elites, namely the urban patriciates in Italy and Flanders and the princely nobility in Burgundy and the German speaking areas, and then permeated into other social groups.

By contrast, during the 18th century, changes in military and dancing movements were launched by different social groups. Changes in military movements were initiated among the aristocratic or nobilitated officer corps, whereas changes in dancing were promoted by the upper bourgeoisie. At the beginning of the 19th century, the change in military movements was complete, whereas the change in dancing movements did not exclude residuals of conventionality well beyond the 19th century.

Consequently, the effects of the changes in both forms of social action were different. The late 15th-century equilibrium position and its related behavioural norms developed into the dominant characteristic of all European social groups, regulating the bodily movements of their members regardless of origin and place of settlement. Although it will be admitted that, perhaps, farmers and bourgeois were more frequently subject to territorial policing regulations than the nobility, the principal conformity of behavioural norms helped constituting social groups as Europe-wide groups, whose behavioural norms were – at least in part – not subject to the partial legislation of territorial rulers.

But the result of the corresponding change at the end of the 18th century was fundamentally

different. Although the change brought into existence a new type of bodily movements, it did not lead to a complete redefinition of behavioural norms. Instead, in the case of dancing, residuals of conventionality ushered in an aesthetic historicism, which has rightly been regarded as characteristic of 19th-century art and culture. But with regard to the military, the change was total. Neither in military theory nor in military practice were there any residuals of conventionality allowed to persist beyond the first decade of the 19th century. Even at the end of the century, a historian like Hans Delbrück faced ardent criticism by military practitioners when he made an attempt at proving the principal rationality of 18th-century linear tactics.⁵⁰

Finally, the new behavioural norms of the 19th century were no longer made in the expectation of Europe-wide acceptance. Instead, it was believed that they were going to be valid only within specific groups which were regarded as definable in terms of a common language, history and culture and for which the term "nation" came in use. It is against this background that Clausewitz could argue that uniform behavioural norms, such as those concerning social action, ought to permeate the entire armed forces of a nation.

Notes

1. See: Eichberg (1975), pp. 118–135. Id. (1978), pp. 188 ff. Nitschke (1979), pp. 127–140. Id. (1989), pp. 277–315.
2. See on the knightly tournaments: Barber (1989), pp. 48–76. J. Barker (1986). Denholm-Young (1948), pp. 240–268. Fleckenstein (1985). Poeschko (1984). J. Vale (1982). See on fencing: Castle (1888). Hergsell (1881). Id. (1896). Hils (1985). Id. (1987), pp. 1–54. Nitschke (1987), pp. 70–71, 133–135. A bibliography of the fencing manuals is provided by Vigeant (1882).
3. See on Swiss warfare in the later Middle Ages: Grosjean (1953), pp. 129–171. Id. (1976a). Id. (1976b). Haene (1899), p. 165. Kleinschmidt (1989), pp. 24–26. Sablonier (1979), pp. 429–477. Schaufelberger (1966). Id. (1972). Id. (1974). Wackernagel (1956), pp. 283–316. Winkler (1982). The best pictorial source on late medieval Swiss warfare is the Berne Chronicle by Diebold Schilling the Elder (1943/5).

4. See on English archery: Bradbury (1985). Deters (1913). Cf. on the crossbow: Harmuth (1975). Heer (1978), pp. 170–200. And cf. on the Aragonese: Sablonier (1971).
5. See on the development of firearms technology in late medieval Europe: Kleinschmidt (1991a). Rathgen (1928). Schmidtchen (1977a). Id. (1977b). Id. (1977c). Id. (1990).
6. Cf. Nell (1914), pp. 228–232.
7. I have listed the references in my paper Kleinschmidt (1986), pp. 105–112.
8. On the date of this fencing manual cf.: Hils (1985), pp. 165–172.
9. Printed, among others, by Trease (1974), p. 239.
10. See the descriptions and depictions by Marozzo (1536). Saint-Didier (1573).
11. See: Nitschke (1987), pp. 26–28, 136. Wolf (1918/19), pp. 10–42.
12. See: Adelman/Weise (1954), pp. 26–33. Gaulhofer (1930). Krienke (1959), p. 86. Taubert (1968), pp. 88–89. Tikkanen (1912), pp. 47–52. Weise (1949), pp. 172–194.
13. He may have followed the early 15th-century model provided by Domenico da Piacenza (ca 1390 – ca 1465 [Ms Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, Fonds ital. 972, fol. 13ff. Cf.: Brainard (1977), p. VI. Prevenier/Blockmans (1988), p. 315.
14. See: Brainard (1979), pp. 21–44. Sachs (1933), pp. 199–200. At the same time, when the dancing masters appear, the social position of the fencing masters becomes upgraded to a respectable profession; cf.: Hils (1986), pp. 255–271.
15. See: Bourcier (1978), pp. 51–63. Brainard (1977), pp. I–VII. Dolmetsch (1975a), pp. 9–33. Id. (1975b), pp. 18–48. Wood (1952), pp. 92–116.
16. See also Dürer (1512), plate I. Cf.: Hene (1934). Kleinschmidt (1989), p. 69. Lochner (1953), p. 13. Nitschke (1987), p. 150. Schnitter (1971), pp. 445–453. Wassmannsdorff (1870). Id. (1871). In Maximilian's *Freydal*, a knight is depicted in the same way as Dürer depicted his dancers; see: Leitner (1880/82), fol. 159. For a parallel in sports, specifically in 16th-century tennis see: Gillmeister (1986), pp. 23–39, 53–73.
17. This Italian word is commonly believed to be a derivation from Old Frankish-Lombard skirmjan, which appears in Italian during the 14th century as a *nomen agentis*.
18. See: Kleinschmidt (1989), pp. 53–54.
19. Posthumously printed: Cornazano (1493). Id. (1507). Cf.: Serebey (1926), p. 455.
20. Leitner (1880/82), fol. 139, 202, etc.
21. See: Lecküchner (1532). Maximilian, Weisskunig (1888), p. 104.
22. Leitner (1880/82), fol. 139, 202, etc.
23. There are, evidently, mid 15th-century battle pictures and pictures of fighting men which exhibit attitudes that came to be practiced only at the very end of the century; see, for example, the battle of nude men by Antonio del Pallaiuolo (1431–1498) who depicted men as fighting in an equilibrium position in largely the same way as that which has been described here for the 16th century. However, this and other battle paintings do not seem to reflect the current military practice, but, instead, an ideal of bodily behaviour which became exhibited through military action.
24. For instance, in connection with the Swiss/Swabian war of 1499, Maximilian himself was aware of the tactical disadvantage that the lansquenets type of combat included. On occasions, he accused his lansquenets of insubordination and blamed losses of battles on them, even in official publications which were devised for his own praise; see: Maximilian, Weisskunig (1888), cap. 174.
25. Against the arguments presented by scholars such as Hermann Wiesflecker and Gerhard Oestreich, I have tried (1986; 1994) to defend my view that Maximilian was an innovator of circlewise movements and the equilibrium position and that these innovations contributed to the maintenance of group discipline outside the control of centralized institutions. Cf. Oestreich (1969), Wiesflecker (1971/86).
26. The introduction of this stiff attitude into military movements was one important consequence of the military reforms of the Oranians. See: Kleinschmidt (1989), pp. 96–149. Id. (1991). Id. (in press). For equivalents in fencing see: Hergsell (1896).
27. A list is provided in Kleinschmidt (1989), pp. 358–384.
28. Kleinschmidt (1989), pp. 150–195.
29. See the remarks by Bleckwenn (1987), pp. 55–72, and Duffy (1987), pp. 7–13. The stereotype of the sturdy, unbecoming, fat and disorderly peasant can be traced back well into the 16th century, when Dürer emphasized it in his theory of proportions and depicted peasants in them same way; see: Anzelewsky (1988), p. 184. The observations by Bleckwenn and Duffy tell against the contention by Büsch (1981), pp. 14–41, that, in 18th-century Prussia, military drill had a direct militarizing impact on peasant life.
30. Cf. for an explicit contemporary statement: Dietrich (1981), p. 231.
31. See: Duffy (1987), p. 99. Kunisch (1990), pp. 49–83. Kirkinen (1960), Peil (1983), pp. 489–595. Stollberg-Rilinger (1986), pp. 9–187.
32. For a contemporary view see: Nicolai (1770). Cf.: Hohrath (1990). See further on the attitudes of military officers towards the Enlightenment: Bertaud (1979), pp. 35–41. Bien (1979), pp. 68–98. Doig (1988), pp. 1–10. Duffy (1987). Jones (1980), pp. 29–48. Kann (1982), pp. 29–45. Kelly (1982), pp. 120–131. Kieselbach (1988), pp. 486–490. Koser (1904), pp. 239–273. Kunisch (1975), pp. 173–222. Repgen (1985), pp. 27–49. Hence, one can hardly, as Wehler (1987), pp. 244–254, does, place the linear tactics in opposition against the Enlightenment.

33. See: Gentleman's Magazine (1765), pp. 203, 239. Cf.: Kleinschmidt (1989), p. 347. Schlenke (1963), p. 279. There were contemporary English translations of Prussian drill manuals; cf.: Kleinschmidt (1989), pp. 347, 378. Schlenke (1963), p. 278.
34. The metaphor was used by Kant in his criticism of what he described as the war-proneness of balance-of-power warfare. See: Kant (1991), p. 92.
35. In the meantime, evidence for the reception of Guibert's ideas before the French Revolution of 1789 is to be found in: Ordonnance (1776), Steuben (1779). Dundas (1788).
36. See: Rules (1798). Istruzione (1799). Exercir-Reglement (1806). Abrihtungsreglement (1807). Reglement for the Prussian Cavalry (1812).
37. Cf.: Colin (1902). Corvisier (1985), 85–102. Kleinschmidt (1989), pp. 246–264.
38. Derived from Latin minutus.
39. Parallels for this conception of nature are to be found in many different contemporary sources, for example in Carl von Linné's botanical tables, which demonstrate nature as being well ordered, and in the arrangements of books on library shelves. Cf.: Kleinschmidt (1987), pp. 128–129.
40. Most elaborately in the frontispiece to his art theoretical work of 1753; printed by Bindman (1981), p. 153.
41. For parallels see: Reynolds (1905), pp. 53–54. Burke (1902), pp. 136–138. Cf.: Bindman (1981), pp. 153–158.
42. Cf.: Abert (1929), pp. 264–286. Haas (1923), pp. 6–36. Niedecken (1914). Petermann (1981), pp. 14–16.
43. See also: Goethe, *Dichtung und Wahrheit* (1812), part II, book 9, where he contrasts the minuet with the waltz; while in Strasbourg, he practised waltz under the supervision of a dancing master and his two daughters and recounts that the dancing master preferred the minuet over the waltz.
44. For parallels in sport, for example, skating, see: GuthsMuths (1970), pp. 195–201. For parallels in military marches cf.: Kappey (1894). Kastner (1848). Strom (1926). Toeche-Mittler (1966/75).
45. Cf.: Teitler (1977). Covington (1976).
46. For a late reference see: O'Cahill (1784), pp. 45–46.
47. As is frequently believed by writers on military matters; see: Paret (1986).
48. As is frequently believed by writers on festivals; see: Haug (1989).
49. The phrase is Foucault's. See: Foucault (1973), p. 183. Cf. Kleinschmidt (1982), pp. 478–480.
50. See the contrast between Scharnhorst and his disciple Clausewitz; cf.: Gat (1989), pp. 139–250. On the Delbrück controversy see: Delbrück (1890). Bernhardt (1890). Cf.: Aron (1976). Wallach (1967).

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