Spontaneous Processes of Civilization

The Swedish Case

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A vertical perspective has in practice, though not in theory, dominated recent research on the civilization process. This process is seen basically as heteronomous, carried out through forces imposed on the masses by the elite. The civilization process is seen as external and coercive.
Criticisms of this interpretation are developed. Though we reject a definition of civilization solely in terms of impulse control, our aim is not to shatter the heritage of Norbert Elias, but rather to integrate his contributions into a wider concept of the civilization process. As an alternative, we point to the existence of a secular learning process involving growth in the communicative capacity among large groups of people. Human thought grows through action and reflection. When entering wider social and economic networks, actors will meet many others with varied life experiences. Individual biographies will differ more from each other. As people expose themselves to others, for instance due to increased migration, personal as well as group information fields grow. This will be associated with a dramatic rise in the transaction costs involved in controlling others. Actors will have to cope with new realities where violence and tight personal control become more costly, if not impossible.
This process has intended as well as unintended consequences. Several limitations of the vertical perspective on civilization are illustrated with reference to Sweden before 1850. Empirically, the striking long-term decline in interpersonal violence up to 1750 is suggestive not only of a strengthening of impulse control, but also of a growth in the communicative competence among broad strata. This situation breeds tolerance and to some extent empathy, but also indifference. Values once considered absolute – or not reflected at all – will appear more relative. The growth of knowledge associated with the widening of networks encourages reflectiveness, planning, and material growth. But reflection is also at the root of anxiety of the Kierkegaardian type, which probably did not emerge as a widespread phenomenon until the former half of the nineteenth century. Regional information on suicide rates is reviewed in this perspective. Other changes which have occurred spontaneously, interacting with State policies without being determined by them, involve secularization – strongly resisted by the authorities – and new patterns of migration and marriage.

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Introduction

This essay on the civilization process in Sweden deals with four broad questions. What is to be meant by the concept *civilization process?* What has been the general path of this process over time and space? What explains the process? Finally, should the civilization process be seen as cumulative and irreversible?

The natural points of departure for the discussion are Norbert Elias and, secondly, some types of acculturation theory. The latter is often applied in research on the history of popular culture, which usually interprets the civi-

lization process as a matter of acculturation or disciplination. These approaches differ from each other, but they also have some common traits. Though broad in itself, this kind of research should be seen in an even wider context, as an outflow of the recent interest in secular social macroprocesses.

The vertical perspective has in practice, though not in theory, dominated recent research on the civilization process. This process is seen basically as heteronomous, carried out through forces imposed on the masses by the elite. The civilization process is seen as external and coercive relative to popular culture and to existing patterns of interaction among the broad strata.

We are critical of this interpretation and its underlying assumptions. So these theories or generalized empirical perspectives, are not only taken as a point of departure. We depart from them as well. In contrast to mainstream research, we claim that the process of civilization has mainly evolved spontaneously and horizontally. In short, we point to the existence of a secular learning process involving a growth in the communicative capacity among large groups of people. Even if this hypothesis is our primary concern throughout this essay, it will be supplemented by a number of other objections to the vertical perspective on the civilization process.

The learning process is based on self-activity, which has intended as well as unintended consequences. Human thought grows through action and reflection. When entering wider social and economic networks, actors will meet many others with varied life experiences. Individual biographies will differ more from each other. As people expose themselves to others, for instance as a result of increased migration, personal as well as group information fields grow. This will be associated with a dramatic rise in the transaction costs involved in controlling others.

Actors will have to cope with a new system of realities in which violence and tight personal control become more costly, if not impossible. Empirically, the striking long-term decline in interpersonal violence is suggestive not only of a strengthening of impulse control, but also of a growth in the communicative competence among broad strata. Other means of handling conflicts, more conducive to the formation of wider economic networks, have apparently been acquired.

This situation breeds tolerance and to some extent empathy, but also indifference. Values once considered absolute – or not reflected at all – will appear more relative. The growth of knowledge associated with the widening of networks encourages reflectiveness, planning, and material growth. But reflection is also at the root of anxiety of the Kierkegaardian type, which probably did not emerge as a widespread phenomenon until the former half of the nineteenth century.

The first section below outlines the main different approaches that have been employed in the analysis of the civilization process. The second section presents our own perspective, theoretically as well as empirically. Our aim is not to shatter the heritage of Norbert Elias, but rather to integrate his contributions into a wider concept of the civilization process. There is much to be questioned in the works of Elias and Foucault, and of course in the Marxist tradition as well. Still, their influence incessantly has forced historians to ask new questions and to search for new sources, though the answers have not always been supportive of the theories.

Main trends in current research on the civilization process

What follows in this section is an attempt to discern the major trends in current historical research on the civilization process. This will be done in two steps, i.e. from two different angles. Taking the first step, we will give a sketch of what can be regarded as the three most influential perspectives in this field of research. Subsequently, we try to locate the currently dominating perspective, i. e. the second one, in relation to decisive phases or aspects of the process: the central agents of the process, their goals, the essential qualities (meaning or content) of the process and, finally, its long term effects. Since these aspects

have been the main areas of divergence between historians, this second step points out where a reorientation of the research on the civilization process is most needed. Actually, that is precisely the subject of this essay. Of course, only a small fraction of all relevant works that have been published on the civilization process can be taken into consideration in the following discussion.

Three perspectives

The *first outlook* to be mentioned is that of Gustave Le Bon and early mass psychology. Briefly and bluntly put, Le Bon and his contemporaries – Sigmund Freud, for instance – regarded the masses as primitively drive-ridden. For this reason they must be held in check by civilizing authorities. In other words, the civilizing process was to be promoted by educational measures, whereby people were to be instructed to take command over their violent impulses.[1]

This perspective was based partly on contempt and fear of the untidy or even rebellious crowds of nineteenth and early twentieth century Europe, partly on the theories of sociobiological evolutionism prevalent in the social sciences at the turn of the century (Richards 1989: 549 ff).

Today, few adhere to this view on the civilization process.[2] But from the turn of the century to the early 1960s, it seems that it had a great impact on historical research on rebellious masses. At least this was claimed by E.P. Thompson, E.J. Hobsbawm, G. Rudé and other more or less Marxist historians who in the late 50s started to reinterpret the popular struggles of the pre-capitalist era. This new tradition of social history evolved in explicit opposition to Le Bon's authoritarian conception of ordinary people (Hobsbawm 1959; Rudé 1959; Rudé 1964; Thompson 1963; Thompson 1971).

The social historians of the new brand represent a *second perspective* with respect to the civilization process. Since they have been very successful in redirecting current research in social history, it is appropriate to dwell a little on their way of reasoning.

Of crucial importance was their almost unanimous assertion that the rioting urban crowds of early modern Europe behaved in a rational way, i.e. adapted means to ends. Resorting to violent action in order to pursue their cause, they nonetheless in most cases behaved restrictively, and were capable of attacking real targets and enemies. The masses only rarely hit furiously and without discrimination. In addition, it has been claimed that artisans and other more established parts of the working people made up the main body of the rioting crowds, while the poorest layers usually played an insignificant role.

Within this framework, mental differences between the pre-industrial masses and the working class of the modern capitalist society have been played down. Consequently, earlier as well as contemporary generations' endeavours to civilize the people are conceived of as totally misdirected (Hobsbawm 1959: 111 f; Jarrick 1992: 48 ff.).

Now, the exponents of contemporary crowd historiography have only rarely been directly involved in the discussion about the civilization process. Their significance is due rather to the wide-ranging influence of their general perspective. This way of conceiving the past has come to dominate the historiography of popular culture and of the *acculturation process,* notwithstanding that this tradition has focussed on the suppression of popular culture in early modern Europe, not on urban crowd contention (Bakhtin 1968; Burke 1978; Burke 1987; Davis 1975; Davis 1983; Delumeau 1990; Ginzburg 1980; Muchembled 1985; Sandin 1986; Ödman 1987).

The long term suppression of the popular culture thus forms a *leitmotif.* Account is certainly taken of the fact that people now and then have been able to resist the attacks launched from above, thus sometimes altering authoritarian institutions into arenas for local conflict solving (Taussi Sjöberg 1988; Taussi Sjöberg 1990). Still, even if historians such as Peter Burke or Robert Muchembled do ascribe some resistibility to peasants and artisans of early modern Europe, they rarely if ever consider any spontaneous civilizing efforts among ordinary people during the modern period. The civilization process is predominantly conceived

of as initiated from above, aimed only at disciplination and power expansion.[3]

A *third perspective,* yet to gather momentum, lies somewhere between the two already mentioned. *On the one hand,* it is claimed that during the last 500 years a civilizing process has unfolded. Mentally as well as behaviourally, on the level of personal as well as institutional conduct, real progress towards more humane conditions has been made. Of significance in this respect is, for instance, the fact – established beyond reasonable doubt – that homicide has decreased markedly since the seventeenth century. Correspondingly, in the latter part of the eighteenth century the penal laws slowly softened in many corners of Europe. Humanization of the law was a complex and intriguing process, not reducible to the proposals of the Enlightenment intellectuals capturing the minds of the sovereigns, though the influence of the *Philosophes* should not be underrated.

This perspective implies that men and women once lacked the degree of self-control, tolerance and empathy they successively have acquired during the civilization process.

Yet, this gradual unfolding of the potentials of man is not to be regarded primarily as imposed from above, i.e. like the diffusion of an innovation. Rather, the process of civilization has to a substantial degree proceeded independently on different social levels. For example, the long term decline in the rate of homicide cannot be explained with reference to growing efforts of courts to send murderers to the gallows. Actually, quite the opposite happened. People's declining propensity to kill each other was parallelled, or rather followed, by the authorities' *declining* readiness to impose death penalties, though admittedly the courts often for centuries had applied the laws less severely than was stipulated.

Within this framework, the achievements realized in the civilization process are to be considered first and foremost as a spontaneous consequence of the expansion of human interaction that, so far, has accompanied mankind throughout history. It is a kind of ongoing phylogenetic learning process, in which the inheritance of the experiences made by earlier generations must be seen as cultural rather than biological.[4] Though to a considerable extent spontaneous, the process has sometimes been promoted by disciplination initiatives taken by members of local communities themselves, without aid or pressure from above. The temperance movement of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century can be seen as a true example of this. Here, people realized that it rested with themselves to escape from perdition, and that this could be achieved only by some kind of educational measures aimed at increasing their self-control.

It will probably not surprise the reader that the last perspective comes closest to our own perception of the civilization process. We might therefore involuntarily have given a biased picture of the other perspectives. Be that as it may, we still believe that the principal alternatives have been indicated by this brief presentation. Still lacking is an examination of the analytical ingredients of the different perspectives on the civilization process. Let us therefore proceed to a discussion of that issue.

Civilization research analytically reconstructed

In the following attempt at analytical reconstruction of the principal elements in current research on the civilization process, the concept of *impulse control* is put at the core. As will be evident later on, this is no indication that the civilization process ought to be narrowly identified with the cultivation of manners. The reason is simply that this concept, owing to the profound influence of Norbert Elias' works, has been at the centre of research in the field.

Even if a one-sided preoccupation with the control of impulses can be disputed, from a scientific point of view this thrust has the advantage, compared with other relevant signs of civilization, of being empirically observable. Elias' empirical findings sometimes are far from convincing. Yet what he has tried to demonstrate can be empirically validated, though other sources are needed than those explored by him if decisive conclusions are to be reached.

The German ethnologist Hans Peter Duerr, who is one of the most fierce opponents of Elias, has launched an empirical attack on his interpretation.[5] However, what mainly has stirred up controversies among the scholars is rather issues concerning the causes of the civilization process, who were the chief agents promoting it, its essence and long term effects.

The *first* analytical as well as chronological *sequence* concerns the *central agents* of the process. Quite a few of today's students have conceived of the civilization process as essentially working vertically, singling out the profane and ecclesiastical authorities as its conscious and powerful instigators.

This is a perspective that for decades has dominated the historiography of popular culture. With his work on Rabelais and the disintegration of the culture of laughter during the modernization process, Michail Bachtin can be seen as an early pioneer of this outlook. Later, Michel Foucault's anti-modern treatises on the history of the clinic and the prison have had an insurmountable importance in the shaping of the analytical setting. Many professional historians have been inspired by their works, of whom Peter Burke, Robert Muchembled and Carlo Ginzburg are among the best known.[6]

It is characteristic of this framework that different and ideologically distinct segments of the power elite are often grouped together as a monolithic power bloc, stubbornly engaged in a common project, using whatever means at their disposal to acculturate the people. Sometimes the project is even described as a secular plot, here to be labelled the narrative design of *the long-term conspiracy*. In these cases the project is conceived *as if* comprehensively arranged from the very outset, and then continuously handed over to new generations of civilizing agents, all equally loyal to the intentions of the initial architects.[7] Correspondingly, ordinary men and women, subject to the disciplining efforts of the elites, have also been too undifferentially treated. It must be admitted, however, that today these oversimplified schemes are more or less out of fashion, critizised even by those historians who once introduced them (Burke 1984: 5–8; Ödman 1991: 47).

Still, despite this historiographical shift, ordinary men and women are seldom ascribed civilizing aims or actions of their own. Instead, they are looked upon *either* as essentially wild *or* as rational and self-controlled from the outset.

The *second sequence* concerns the main objectives or efforts of the central agents. As we have already said above, the disciplining of customs and manners as well as attempts to integrate ordinary people into the established Christian culture have for some decades been discerned as the dominating intention. As a corollary, the Enlightenment has lost much of its prominence as a decisive movement for the development of humanitarian values. Rather, it has been substantially toned down, and is today often regarded only as a certain stage in the secular process of disciplination.

This approach has been pursued in contradistinction to that of an older generation of historians, which basically appreciated the project of modernization as implying reforms of the penal laws, greater tolerance of radical and even heretical opinions, alphabetization, a general growth of knowledge, and other aspects of progress.[8] Some historians remain fairly unaffected by the current paradigmatic shifts. They continue to regard at least some of the reform projects led by the elites of evolving modern society as basically humanitarian. One example is the American historian Peter Gardella, who in his book *Innocent ecstacy* explores how Christianity provided the American people with an ethic of sexual pleasure.[9]

As is well known, Michel Foucault has been one of the most influential protagonists of the anti-evolutionist reinterpretation of the Enlightenment, though he has rarely touched upon at the concept of the Enlightenment itself. Probably, Foucault's way of bypassing it testifies to his deeply felt contempt of the once so celebrated movement (Foucault 1976; Foucault 1979; O'Brien 1989).

Influential as he has been, the mainstream of civilization research has not followed Foucault in his structuralist refusal to single out particular men responsible for the modernization process. According to Foucault, power is never *possessed,* but only *exercized* by men

who are tied to structural constraints to the same extent as the most humble of their subordinates. In contrast, most historians studying the civilization process have been eager to identify various authoritarian collectivities behind the seemingly impersonal forces reducing men of flesh and blood to bleak tools of power.

Judged by his theoretical perspective, Norbert Elias must be set apart from those historians who have emphasized the vertical aspect of the civilization process and the crucial disciplining role played by the power elites. According to his *figurational* approach, all agents, at whatever social level and in whatever formal position, take an equal part in performing the entire span of human interaction. This fabric of interactions, and nothing external, is precisely what makes up society; consequently, this is also what causes structural reproduction or change. Elias' theoretical construct should of course not be confused with Foucault's. To the latter, men are tied to impersonal fetters, to the former they tie (or liberate) themselves. In this respect the similarities between them must be regarded as insignificant.

Despite the fact that the theoretical approaches of Elias, Foucault and the historiography of popular culture actually differ on crucial points, quite a few students of the civilization process have approvingly referred to all of them. Consequently, a substantial degree of analytical tension can be found within their theoretical framework (Muchembled 1985: 188 f; Sandin 1986: 37 f, 42 f, 255, 276 n 15).

A corresponding lack of internal consistency is discernible when taking into consideration not only the theoretical parts of Norbert Elias' works but also his empirical applications. In his applied analysis, a rather plain causal scheme replaces the sophisticated figurations outlined theoretically. The process of civilization, successively internalizing moral standards, is said to have originated with the rise of the national states in the early modern period, leading to a monopolization of violence and to a corresponding pacification of the citizens. So, apart from his theoretical contributions, referring to Elias in this context seems less inappropriate than it would seem otherwise (Söderberg 1990a: 577 ff).

In designating the *third sequence* we will talk about the *essential qualities* of the process. Two notions will be introduced here.

First, it is almost self-evident that the process of civilization, in relation to what originally might have been endeavoured, has hardly ever worked in an undistorted way. Human action regularly has unintended consequences. Since there is no reason why the civilization process should be an exception, it is surprising to see that numerous historical narratives are still arranged *as if* the acculturation process has worked smoothly to fulfil the aspirations of its agents.

Second, for the sake of simplicity the civilization process could be reduced to two dynamic *qualities*: *the restriction of drives* and *empathy* or compassion. Though these qualities do not necessarily have to be conceived of as mutually exclusive, they are often contrasted with each other. The former is usually emphasized at the expense of the latter.

As to the diverse perspectives on the long run effects of the civilization process, an issue corresponding to the *fourth sequence* of analysis, two distinct approaches are discernible. Most students, inspired by the pessimistic outlooks of Weber and Foucault, have paid attention to intolerance against deviating behaviour and the disenchanting rationalization of the life-world as the most striking long term outcome. Others point to the growth of democracy and rational – or even empathic – communication, as its main and lasting results.

In current historical research, the latter opinion is held by an almost negligible minority. Today, it even runs the danger of being totally ruled out. Yet, this more optimistic view of the civilization process deserves increased attention, partly because its insignificance seems empirically unfounded, partly because it has been more influential *outside* the domain of historiography.

Among philosophers and sociologists, Jürgen Habermas has been quite successful in promoting his theory of communicative action. Within this framework, the Enlightenment project and the process of rationalization are reas-

sessed in more optimistic, albeit somewhat utopian terms, than were once common among the founding fathers of the Frankfurt school. It would be a mistake, though, to locate Habermas among the unequivocal supporters of the modernization process. His mission has certainly not been to abdicate from the critical heritage of Horkheimer and Adorno (and Max Weber), but only to adjust it to some undeniable humane achievements of Western civilization.

Summing up this section, it can be argued that the emphasis of contemporary research is laid on downward disciplination, on the triumphant repression of popular manners and culture, as the key characteristics of the civilization process. According to this dominating approach, the chain between the intentions of the original instigators, the working of the process and its final results has never been broken. The rest of this essay will be devoted to critical examination of this approach.

Notes on the concept of the civilization process

Here two types of conceptual and critical remarks will be provided. The first concerns the workings of the civilization process, the second the substantive aspects or the content of it.

The workings of the process

Our emphasis on the horizontal and spontaneous aspects of the civilization process is meant to redirect the focus of scholarly interest towards certain spontaneous mechanisms of societal development that, unfortunately, have been neglected by current research. Needless to say, this endeavour should not be taken as a claim that mankind has never been subjected to disciplination from above. That would only be substituting one kind of one-sidedness for another. But if narrowness is to be avoided, there are still further aspects to be considered.

First, irrespective of the relative importance of the vertical workings of the secular process of civilization, this process cannot be looked upon as a long term conspiracy. As a rule, men in power do not simply duplicate the ambitions of preceding generations of authorities. While of course to a certain extent building on their experiences, they generally design educational and civilizing projects of their own, projects whose long term and unintended consequences often conflict with the ambitions of subsequent generations of power-holders, and so on in a never-ending story of intricate change.

Let us give just one example of that. The so called *acculturation process* and the *project of Enlightenment,* both of which were initiated from above, fostered alphabetization and, as a consequence, a very broad diffusion of the holy word of the Scripture. By this undertaking the authorities wanted to rule out pre- and un-Christian beliefs still prevailing among ordinary people. On a broad scale, the Swedish alphabetization campaign started in the late seventeenth century. From the point of view of its originators the campaign was tremendously successful: only one hundred years later a majority of the population was able to read, and most people also kept at least some of the canonical handbooks among their worldly goods. So the cultural change that materialized could be seen as the intended result of a civilizing project instilled from above. By employing alphabetization as an instrument of power, it seems that the authorities were capable of instilling precisely those Christian values into the people they aimed at (Jarrick 1992: 110 ff).

However, the process had unintended consequences as well. One of them was the more or less fundamentalist revivalist movements that dawned in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. The so-called *läsare* ("Readers") or evangelical literalists of northern Sweden can be seen as an almost ideal typical example of these movements. Equipped with the newly acquired tool of knowledge, i.e. through their personal acquaintance with the written word, ordinary men and women were now in a position to measure the faith (or lack of faith) of the authorities. And these authorities – profane as well as ecclesiastical – taking part in the so-called *neological* movement within the established church itself, were now increasingly turning their back on the doctrinal literalism of their forerunners. Ironically, at the very moment when the prominence of the holy

word increasingly captured the minds of ordinary men and women, the *Christian* elites downgraded the importance of knowing the precise content of the canonical books. Now, instead, they turned their interest from words to deeds. So the tensions in spiritual matters that flourished between the people and their masters towards the end of the eighteenth century was due on one hand to the success of the alphabetization campaign, on the other hand to the reorientation among the elites away from the original intentions of this campaign (Hedlund 1949: 280–283; Hessler 1956: 46–97; Holmgren 1948, chapter 4).

The above example illustrates a further point: vertical projects can provoke horizontal projects which are hard, if not impossible, to supervise and regulate from the centres of power. Not only did the revivalism of the late eighteenth century manage to stay independent of the authorities, it also picked out the neological elite as the main target of its fundamentalist attack.

Finally, quite a substantial number of the vertical projects of civilization were aimed at reduction rather than expansion of the control of popular conduct. For example, in Sweden the recurrent legislation reforms concerning the judicial status of suicides, have successively led to diminishing collective and official pressure on the individual. From being an act looked upon as a mortal sin leading to official condemnation, in the course of the nineteenth century suicide became a private concern, no more causing either official comment or legal sanction (Ohlander 1986: 25–55).

The notions given here supplement our principal objection to a narrow vertical perspective on the civilization process. But they also envisage the need of vigilance against any kind of one-sidedness, including equally narrow horizontalism.

The content of the concept of the civilization process

Elias placed the control of impulses at the centre of his analysis. It may seem quite plausible that a strengthening of impulse control has actually taken place in a longer historical perspective. Yet, this choice is only one among several other strong alternatives, and Elias did not develop a convincing argument as to why impulse control should be given priority.

Among the alternatives, it could be argued that empathy, the power of feeling and understanding the conditions of others, should be defined as an even more essential ingredient in the concept of civilization. Another possibility would be to place what Jürgen Habermas labels the communicative capacity at the centre. Habermas emphasizes the growing capability of interaction based on reasoning and relativism, as opposed to resorting to compulsion or violence (Habermas 1984–1987).

In fact, these three aspects need to be combined into a more complex concept of civilization. A description of the process of civilization based solely on reference to impulse control will easily appear as absurd. Torture, for instance, has in general been based on impulse control, being employed as a calculated instrument to obtain information. But it cannot be considered part of civilized behaviour.

Furthermore, the civilization process cannot be seen only as a matter of controlling impulses but also of liberating them. In a more realistic analysis of civilization, it will be necessary to differentiate among impulses.

For instance, the long-term Western trend has been to *repress* violent impulses but to *recognize and accept* many sexual impulses.[10] This combination of suppression of violence and acceptance of sexuality may have had great repercussions on the relations between the sexes. As long as sexual impulses were forbidden, males could successfully project them on women, who were often seen as enticing men into falling victim to lust. As male sexuality was disconnected from sin, he was able to find within himself impulses that previously had been attributed to the females. As a consequence, this specific part of oppression of women could no longer be held as tenable (though other reasons could always be found for inequality between the sexes[11]). It is conceivable – though by no means as yet demonstrated – that this process of decline of violence and recognition of sexuality could be of some

importance in explaining why the position of women has tended to be strengthened during the last few centuries.[12]

Still, impulse control defends itself as a vital part of the civilization process insofar as it is used in *conjunction with* empathy and communicative competence. Taken in this sense, the civilizing process evolves as people become more capable of controlling their own impulses while at the same time seeing their needs and impulses from outside, that is to say from the point of view of other human beings. A crucial factor in the civilization process will then be the development of many-sidedness in interpersonal communication, as distinct from interaction in closely connected groups with a high degree of internal similarity and conformity.

This more complex conceptualization will encourage a focus on the *content* of civilization. Of course this is not an entirely new programme. It was ambitiously formulated by the Scottish Enlightenment more than two centuries ago. In the 1770s, John Millar tried to demonstrate how the position of woman in society had changed in the long term and how the relations between the sexes had evolved.[13] He examined the relations of authority among people – within families, between masters and servants, within tribes and villages, as well as in modern, 'polished' society with its advanced division of labour. Millar was an optimist; he was heartened by seeing that brutal force in barbarian ages had had to give in to a greater amount of mutual respect between human beings and a less confined position of women. This did not prevent him from warning against the division of labour, if driven too far, leading to degradation and ignorance among the workers. Millar's optimism is of course not necessarily linked to his view of civilization as consisting of several related aspects bearing on the substance of historical change.

The core of our argument is that the concept of civilization has to be more comprehensive and substantivistic than it would be if it relied solely on impulse control. We place empathy and the formation of binding values associated with it (e.g., the rejection of brutal punishments) at the centre,[14] empathy here regarded as the judgment of another person's experience *as if* it was one's own, but not as identification with the other person (Woodruff-Smith 1989: 118 f, 125 f). Impulse control refers to a formal rather than a substantive aspect of the process of civilization, and the same thing can be said about communicative capability. Communication can be used for any purpose, civilizing or de-civilizing ones. But insofar as these formal aspects are tied to empathy – by itself constituting the most essential part of communicative competence – the development of impulse control and communicative capacity will be necessary to clarify the process of civilization.

The civilizing process as self-activity: some Swedish examples

The civilizing process deserves to be studied empirically in a long-term perspective. While the explanatory schemes advanced by Elias and others do raise a large number of theoretically important issues, these problems cannot be solved by theoretical work alone. As Elias himself recognized several decades ago, strategic aspects of the secular change not only *should* be, but also in fact *can* be elucidated by reference to empirically clearly delineated phenomena.

Normative source materials, such as the etiquette handbooks used by Elias for his history of manners, will not suffice. Though there is no reason to discard normative sources, it will be even more essential to systematically use many types of information on practical interaction. Also, a stricter fashion of analyzing the data than that employed by Elias will be needed. Non-refutable hypotheses must be avoided. For instance, when clothing changes to expose greater parts of the body, this is seen by Elias as evidence of increasing control over sexual impulses. But signs of inhibition, involving a tightening of garments and fear of nudeness, are *also* regarded as indicative of tightened impulse control.[15]

As a consequence, no observation data could possibly disprove the hypothesis of strengthened impulse control. This is of course unten-

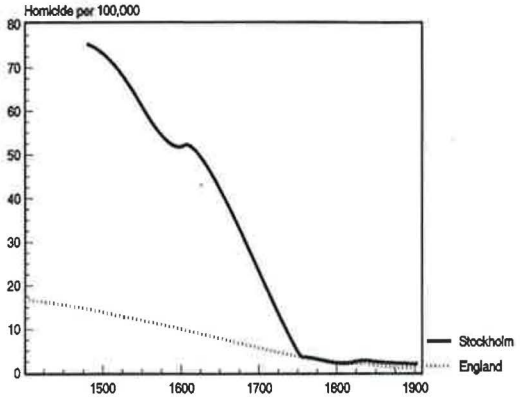

Fig. 1. Homicide rates per 100,000 in Stockholm and England, 1400–1900.

able, and researchers should try to make clear what types of observations they see as falsifying their hypotheses.

Some empirical aspects of the Swedish civilization process are briefly presented below.[16] The following aspects will be dealt with: long-term trends in homicide; the widening of economic networks, migration and exposure; secularization and the growth of knowledge; and the sense of humanitarian justice. These issues will be considered by means of Swedish regional contrasts describing eighteenth and nineteenth century processes.

The long-term decline in violence

Let us start with the question whether or not a very long-term decline in interpersonal violence has been taking place in Sweden, more or less similar to the secular reduction described for England (Stone 1983; Stone 1985; Sharpe 1985). The use of serious violence in daily life (as distinct from wars and other types of state violence) may be used as an important indicator of the extent to which communicative competence has evolved among the population. In this communicative process, resort to interpersonal violence becomes less prominent. Conflicts are increasingly solved by other means.

In a recent book on violence in medieval and early modern Sweden, Dag Lindström has charted the frequency of homicide in Stockholm from 1475 to 1625.[17] His interpretation is that no evident change in this frequency can be seen during the period in question. In another work, Eva Österberg has demonstrated that homicide rates in several parts of Sweden were significantly reduced run from the mid-seventeenth century onwards.[18]

There can be little doubt, however, that the secular decline in homicide started well before the mid-seventeenth century. Substantial change is discernible already during late medieval or early modern times in Stockholm. An estimated homicide rate of 72 per 100,000 in the period 1475–95 was reduced to 50 in the 1580s. An increase is registered in the early 1620s (to 54 per 100,000), which no doubt relates to the militarization of society during the beginning of the Great Power Era. But the homicide rate does not return to the late medieval level.[19]

Though declining, these levels are extremely high compared to the ones reached by the mid-eighteenth century (slightly below 4 per 100,000) and by the mid-nineteenth century (just below 2). A very important reduction in homicide – at least by a factor ten – thus takes place from the 1620s to 1750.

The Stockholm homicide level during late medieval and early modern times exceeds by a wide margin the English one, as sketched by Stone. But, as is evident from figure 1, the late medieval and early modern drop in the Stockholm curve is far steeper than in the English counterpart. The differential narrows steadily, and by the mid-eighteenth century the gap has been closed. At that date, homicide rates in Stockholm have assumed modern proportions. This massive decline in interpersonal violence cannot be attributed to the creation of a modern police force, which started only during the last quarter of the eighteenth century. It was not until after 1850 that the Stockholm police was endowed with more substantial resources.

Similarly, evidence from some rural areas suggest that a substantial decline in the level of serious violence was taking place during the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.[20] The island of Öland, for example, experienced a fall in registered homicide (including infanticide) from 18 per 100,000 in 1545–60 to 6 in 1620–49.[21] An early modern reduction in vio-

Fig. 2. The division of Sweden into demographic areas.

lence also took place in Finland (which was part of Sweden up to 1809), though the level of violence was generally higher there (Ylikangas 1971).

These differences over time can hardly be attributed to changes in the quality of data. Underregistration presents more of a problem in the early data. It was sometimes possible to avoid a homicide trial by arriving at an amicable settlement outside court. The actual decline thus should be even greater than the observed one.[22] There are obviously important parallels here with the long-term English trend in interpersonal violence as outlined by Stone.

In the century after 1750, however, an increase in the national level of the frequency of interpersonal violence occurred. A regional redistribution of violence was taking place from Stockholm to other parts of the country. In 1750, homicide was most common in Stockholm city. A century later, the Stockholm level did not exceed the national average. Now other parts of the country, particularly in the West and the South-East, had emerged as the most violent (though the levels were generally far below those registered for early modern times).

Many years ago, Gustav Sundbärg (1913: 223 ff) divided Sweden into three main demographic areas: the North, the East, and the West (figure 2). The East was characterized by lower marital fertility than the West and the North, despite a comparatively low age at marriage. The East was more proletarianized, whereas small-scale peasant farming was typical of the West. In these terms, the regional distribution of violence corresponds to a shift from the East to the West. As will be seen below, these regions differ from each other also in several other dimensions of relevance to the process of civilization.

Suffocation of infants by their mothers appears to have been a far more common cause of death in the early modern period than later on.[23] The cases of suffocation should not be considered part of violent criminality (unless of course a case of infanticide could be detected). The mothers who had suffocated their infants were sentenced not for infanticide but only for having been careless. The long-term decrease probably indicates a greater amount of parental care of the infants. In the century after 1750, the frequency of suffocation declined rapidly, and towards the end of the nineteenth century it had become a rare phenomenon.

The regional variations are striking, however. In several parts of the West there was still a fairly high level even during the first part of the nineteenth century. We can be reasonably certain that the great majority of cases were unintentional, placing these events in another category than violent crime. But this does not make the great regional variations less interesting from the point of view of civilization analysis. A possible interpretation is that respect for human life was less developed in certain parts of the West, attitudes which could affect violent criminality as well as the frequency of suffocation of infants. If mothers have cared more for their infants, this would arguably present a very important dimension of the civilization process.

Most of the rise in suicide rates in Sweden has occurred after 1870 (Ohlander 1986: 60 f).

But there were distinct regional dissimilarities well before that date. By the mid-eighteenth century, suicide was more common in Stockholm than elsewhere. One century later, the recorded rate of suicide in the capital had increased fivefold. Stockholm now was even more exceptional in this respect, the rest of East Sweden following at a considerably lower level. The West exhibited the lowest rates of suicide in the country.

By the mid-nineteenth century the West, in other words, was characterized by relatively *high* rates of external violence and *low* rates of suicide. The East, on the other side, displayed *high* rates of suicide and *low* rates of homicide.

In the East, then, the strains experienced by the individual were being turned inwards rather than outwards, whereas the converse applies to the West. Anxiety may be seen as an expression of self-reflection, stimulated by the growth of knowledge. Reflection not only inspires doubt in religious and other traditional values, but also for the questioning of the ego. When Søren Kierkegaard described *Angst* as in the early 1840s – and its close link to the creation of personal autonomy – he was well aware that this state of mind had been rarely dealt with in philosophy and psychology. But in the urban setting, it was exactly during this time that anxiety was beginning to occur as a far more widespread phenomenon than previously.[24]

Secularization and the growth of knowledge

Religious change was an important component in the breaking down of traditional modes of beliefs and prejudices. In the long-term perspective, there has been a decline of deference and appeals to custom and authority. Since obedience and submission to authority were at the core of orthodox Lutheranism, the gradual liberation from this order also must lead to tensions with the official Church.

As a large-scale phenomenon, secularization begins in Stockholm and in the comparatively commercialized iron districts of Bergslagen. As early as around 1650, there are complaints from the clergy that the population of these districts adhered little to the tenets of official religious practice, unlike the people of the peasant regions. Later, during the eighteenth and nineteenth century, secularization combined with concurrent revivalism to dissolve adherence to the official Church. Unlike the East, the West was relatively unaffected not only by secularization but also by revivalism *outside* the official Church. There were several revivalist movements in the West, but they were usually initiated by the clergy and occurring *within* the Lutheran state church.

One of the most important repercussions of the revivalist questioning of the official Church was the demands for religious tolerance that it implied. The initial reaction of the authorities to emerging Pietism – the earliest of the sects – was to sharpen the laws prohibiting Swedish citizens from joining another religion than the official one. Oppression culminated with a law of 1735 which not only banned the circulation of 'mistaken' religious ideas, but also the personal adherence to them (Jarrick 1985: 85).

Secularization was accompanied by the questioning of existing, unequal relations of power and authority. Traditional Lutheranism required subordination and acceptance of the given social order. In western Sweden, this type of conservative religiousness was approved of for a long time by large segments of the population, especially by the peasants in the plains. Religious attitudes in the West cannot primarily be regarded as maintained by coercion from the State and the Church. Religion, and the various traditions associated with it, were far more firmly rooted than that.

An illustration of religious conservatism may be taken from the demographic West in the 1780s. The bishop of Växjö diocese in Southern Sweden requested that ecclestiastical law should be observed insofar as early service on Christmas Day should commence at six o'clock in the morning. But the parishioners wished to stick to the established practice of starting very early. In some places, they threatened to refrain from visiting Christmas Day service completely if singing was to begin later than at four, or to recover the candlesticks and other gifts that they had presented to the church. One priest reported to the bishop that he could only proceed very carefully in

this matter, since it was so sensitive to the folk of his parish (Johansson 1938: 124 f).

On the other hand, docility and personal domination appear to have been less firmly rooted in East Sweden (partly because of a high degree of population turnover combined with secularization). For instance, one of the most common religious crimes in the country as a whole by the mid-nineteenth century – swearing – was practically unknown in Stockholm. Prosecution for this crime was far more common in the West. Of course swearing was not less frequent in the capital than in the West. What differs is the degree of control over the population – or perhaps mutual surveillance among the rural population – as a prerequisite for being charged with this crime.

The Swedish people early acquired the ability to read. During the Great Power Era of the century after 1620, the State set great store by establishing a system in which the Church effectively examined the population's knowledge of Luther's catechism. As a result of the campaigns associated with this aim, most people were probably able to read printed text by the mid-eighteenth century (Johansson 1979).

With its heavy elements of external organization and pressure, this campaign for educating the people would conform well to the heteronomous model of the civilization. However, this covers only part of the process of the growth of knowledge. The ability to *write* developed far later and was not completed until the latter part of the nineteenth century. Writing ability was highest in the more secularized parts of the country, while substantially lower in the religious regions. Of course, the demand for education has played a great part in shaping this pattern. For this reason the ability to write is more developed in the towns. But even among the towns, there were substantial regional variations between the more secularized East and the culturally more traditional West.[25]

The sense of humanitarian justice

The successive strengthening of humanitarian values may be best studied in the context of criminal law and its application. In the long run, the trend was towards stronger emphasis on the subjective responsibility of the individual. A sense of justice, overriding arbitrariness and brutality, was generated step by step. Maintaining this is of course equivalent to saying that a renewal of material rationality (*Wertrationalität*) was taking place, in which old values were replaced by actors becoming tied to *other values regarded as equally binding*. This sort of change, involving a growing respect for human dignity, is almost completely disregarded in the vertical perspective on the civilization process. Economic historians have more often focussed on formal rationality and the efficiency in adapting means to ends, seeing this as fundamental to the establishment of the modern economic order.[26]

In a classic work on Swedish eighteenth century penal law, Erik Anners described a tendency towards milder punishment (Anners 1965). The use of the death penalty was gradually restrained. The remarkable thing is that this was *not* the outcome of formal decisions. In fact, several laws were passed around 1750 (against burglary, for instance) that were *more severe* than the previous ones. On the contrary, the humanitarian tendency *precedes* the penal law reforms of Gustavus III during the 1780s. The change in court practice also covered a *wider spectrum* than the limited law reforms, which primarily dealt with the burden of proof in cases of infanticide. It may be more realistic to see the law reforms as having been generated from below by changes in court practice.

Anners traced court practice back to about 1730, but death sentences started to decline more than half a century before that date. The falling number of death sentences may of course reflect not only greater leniency but also a decline in the actual rates of homicide and some other crimes leading to this penalty. Death sentences for violent crime were reduced in number at least from around 1640 onwards (Liliequist 1985: 293; Sundin 1991: 15).

In some respects, punishments were becoming less cruel already during the late medieval or early modern period. From the mid-sixteenth century the courts more often decided upon milder penalties than those stipulated by

law. This practice began in the urban courts and was gradually taken up by the rural courts (Hemmer 1982, column 260). Mutilation (e.g., cutting off one ear of a thief) was used – though not habitually – in late medieval times and during the sixteenth century. But it declined rapidly during the early seventeenth century. Similarly, the penalty of being buried alive was dropped. In late medieval Stockholm, this had sometimes been applied to females stealing from their masters though those convicted usually received milder punishments such as flogging.[27]

On the other hand there is an early modern trend in the reverse direction, towards more severe punishments, also applying to other types of crime. Sexual offences, for instance, were dealt with in a more austere way than previously in the decades around 1600, and mutilation was still practiced to some extent. Suppression of sexual crime was linked to a temporary advance of the orthodox Church, similar to what has been observed for England (Stone 1977: 93 ff). In this respect, the civilizing process has obviously not been linear over time.

But the practice of executing persons for adultery was not continued for long. Other brutal retaliations were dropped, too. After 1650, there are practically no instances of cutting the tongue off blasphemers.[28] This suggests that we are dealing with a very longterm process, in which the most ruthless punishments were abandoned as being incompatible with the sense of justice or considerateness. The early modern shift successively led to the abolishment of those penalties causing irrevocable bodily damage. Rejection of painful retributions, not aimed at causing irreparable physical harm, belongs to a considerably later period, to the decades around 1800 or even later.[29]

In Anners' opinion, credit for the more merciful practice of eighteenth century courts rests with the judges. The educated strata, in other words, played the major part in establishing it. However, there was an old tradition of the lower country courts (in which the peasants were well represented) being more lenient than formally required by law. We cannot exclude the possibility that the use of the old, stern retribution increasingly conflicted with the sense of justice developing among wider parts of the population. All this, of course, stresses the importance of not relying too much on formal law without having examined how it was applied by the courts.

Even for early modern times, an analysis of court records for various parts of Sweden demonstrates a rising interest in economic transactions among the rural population. This is particularly true of the first half of the seventeenth century. At the same time, sensitivity to slander and insults is apparently reduced, and we observe a declining proportion of cases of violent crime in many areas (Söderberg 1990). As a consequence of this change in human interaction, the prospects of entering more advanced forms of cooperation and economic networks would have improved.

The widening of economic networks

There is as yet no clear picture as to how market exchange has evolved in pre-industrial Sweden. The broadening of economic networks has been a slow process, gradually preparing the ground for the rapid economic growth emerging during the nineteenth century.

Internal trade in agricultural and rural industrial products was expanding during the latter seventeenth and throughout the eighteenth century.[30] The peasants became increasingly involved in market relations. The number of market places devoted to such exchange grew strongly from about 1660 to 1800, most of the increase taking place after 1730 (Hanssen 1952: 289 ff). Land communications were more intensive in the East, partly as a consequence of the need to supply the iron producing districts (Bergslagen) and Stockholm with foodstuffs and other necessities.

The leading role of the East is largely the effect of the strong growth of the Bergslagen iron districts during the seventeenth century, a period when Stockholm expands from a small town of less than 10,000 to a capital comprising more than 50,000 inhabitants. The axis Bergslagen – Stockholm has been fundamental to the creation of new and broader economic net-

works. This environment also acted as a powerful stimulus to population mobility. Population turnover was high in these Eastern regions already in the seventeenth century. This applies particularly to the landed estate regions producing much of the grains demanded by the population of Bergslagen (Gaunt 1977).

The lively research in historical demography in recent years has made it abundantly clear that a high level of migration is not a product of the decisive period of industrialization (which in Sweden does not start until after 1850). Migration intensity was in fact generally *lower* around 1870 than half a century earlier. The major explanation is that peasant family farming was advancing in this period, especially in the West and the North. This served to decelerate population mobility.[31]

In the perspective of civilization analysis, migration can of course not be seen merely as a means towards a more efficient allocation of the labour force. It will be more promising to assume that migration fields are strongly bound to the *information field* of the individual. The impulses received by the individual should be more or less proportional to the extent of the information field (Hägerstrand 1967). This would apply particularly to preindustrial settings with a limited circulation of printed news and other information. Even a limited growth of the migration field may mean quite a significant enlargement of the degree of exposure to other individuals. This can be expected to result in a more dynamic learning process. No doubt a widening of the information field may have important effects on patterns of marriage, broadening the possibilities of a more autonomous partner choice.

The regional variations in migration are prominent. Migratory movements have been frequent in the economically comparatively advanced East. Several parts of the East are, as mentioned above, characterized by high mobility as early as the seventeenth century. High mobility has no doubt tended to weaken the personal ties to relatives and to encourage more detached relations between people. There are many short entries in the obituaries of Eastern parishes bearing witness to this: "no one here [is] a relative, so no one could tell of her past", "about her life becoming here no one knows" etc.[32]

It is possible that we are facing an emergence of material values, a sense of growing curiosity and outer-worldliness during the eighteenth century. In that case the Enlightenment may be seen not only as a process from above, but as one which was unfolding from below as well. The growing sense of the presence of the outside world could be the result of a progressing division of labour, economic growth, and exposure. Small prints (chapbooks, *skillingtryck*) made up an important and growing part of popular literature. It is typical of the eighteenth-century chapbooks that the proportion of religious ones declined, while those reporting various news multiplied (Jersild 1975: 47, 69). This century also witnessed a rise in the publishing of profane books. The proportion of religious books declined slowly but steadily, more so in Stockholm than in Sweden as a whole.[33]

Extra-marital fertility early became more common in the East, where there is a substantial increase towards the end of the eighteenth century. The rise in extra-marital fertility was influenced by migration, broadening the number of possible partners while simultaneously diminishing the likelihood of parental control. The East is also the part of the country where the fertility decline started, indicating an early development of birth control.[34] Limiting families to fewer children may be one of several expressions of an interest in planning based on expectations of material progress.

The Swedish East/West dimension in several ways resembles the North/South dimension in France. In both countries, the economically and culturally more advanced part of the country (the East in Sweden, the North in France) is distinguished from other regions in terms of, e.g., higher literacy, a higher degree of proletarianization, more intense migration, weaker family ties, a higher illegitimacy rate, and earlier birth control.[35] To this group of variables are added others reflecting the incidence of violence: relatively few homicides and infanticides, but many suicides in East Sweden and in northern France by the mid-nineteenth century. Apparently, these socioeconomic, cultu-

ral and demographic variables tend to intercorrelate in fairly typical ways. Further comparative analysis of these relationships would seem fruitful, though it cannot be carried out here.

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Most processes discussed above have occurred spontaneously, interacting with State policies without being determined by them. It has not been possible for the elite to impose such large-scale transformations of broad patterns of human interaction. Most of the decline in interpersonal violence, for instance, was achieved before the creation of a modern police force. Similarly, it has been far beyond the powers of the authorities to command society in such a way as to produce the observed change in terms of the widening of economic networks, or the new patterns of migration and marriage.

The limitations of the vertical perspective are even more apparent when it comes to secularization and the decline of deference, which obviously unfolded *despite* the actions of the ruling strata. Furthermore, the official Church – always closely linked to the State – appears not to have encouraged the growth of knowledge insofar as it went beyond that of reading. The demand side of education, like most other market processes, has been evolving largely beyond the control of the authorities.

This is not to deny the importance of the formation of the modern state and its assertion of a monopoly of violence.[36] It also must be recognized that part of the elite has been active in civilizing legal practice, well before the law reforms of the Swedish Enlightenment. The growth in knowledge and other parts of the learning process at the base of spontaneous civilization have affected the elite as well as broader strata. But it is not realistic to expect that the State, or any part of the elite of society, alone (even by trying to impose their policies by means of force) could have produced the key elements in the process of civilization.

Causal forces behind the process of civilization

What follows here is an attempt to discern some of the causal forces behind the process of civilization. It must be said from the outset that our explanatory suggestions are sketchy and incomplete, and further elaborations will probably lead to revisions.

Our general hypothesis is that civilizatory progress is due basically to a communicative learning process, inseparable from the history of mankind. This process evolves so to say *phylogenetically*, that is through *cultural* inheritance across generations, and is therefore responsible for the cumulative character of societal transformations over time. The fundamental instance through which the learning process works is mutual exposure between human beings, itself constituting the dynamic structure of society. Here people confront each other horizontally as well as vertically, and therefore the process of civilization cannot be reduced to the latter form of intercourse.

Now, the phylogenetical process of civilization would not occur, were there no *ontogenetic* forces urging for it. One such force seems to be the yearning for narcissistic affirmation, if met with sensible recognition successively transformed into a capacity for social adaptation. If denied, the quest for narcissistic mirroring deteriorates into a constant feeling of humiliation. Parenthetically, according to the secular downward trend of defamation in the court records during the modern period, there seems to have occurred some civilizatory progress in this area of life.

Another ontogenetic civilizing force is the mechanism behind cognitive development as analysed by Jean Piaget: disturbing experiences in horizontal interplay give the impetus to socializing decentering.

Needless to say, if the outcome of these forces could not be handed over to new generations, nothing in the long run would be accomplished.

Probably, these forces can be causally connected with the long-term improvements of the human condition, that in the above discussion have been ascribed to the process of civiliza-

tion. This positive assessment must not be misapprehended as an evolutionistic approach to history. First, our interpretation is based mainly on empirical inferences, themselves not permitting deterministic conclusions. Second, there are no theoretical reasons whatsoever to add such arguments. To be sure, the process of civilization must be regarded as cumulative, since it is unlikely that it will ever be brought back all the way to where it once started. However, the destinies of humanity are not exhausted only because history probably is not a victim of Nietzschean repetition. Cumulativity is certainly not the equivalent of progress. What has been accomplished by one generation can be erased by another, thereby supplying new varieties to the stock of human misery. Actually, we would even venture to say that the process of civilization is threatened by its very progress. It produces its own potential forces of deterioration which, though held in check by other forces, are also inherent in the process.

To a certain extent, the Swedish case seems to conform with this hypothesis. Here, with the economic take-off associated with industrialization and the break-through of liberalism, the civilization process slowed down and even became more ambiguous than it had been in the early modern period. For example, today's low level in interpersonal violence was almost reached already by 1750, more than a century before the economic take-off. Further, during the nineteenth century ambitions to control deviant behaviour increased in some areas (e.g., mental disease[37]), while it was reduced in others (suicide). Correspondingly, the gradual long-term dissociation between sin and sexuality was offset by increasing contempt, or even denial, of female sexuality, a tendency to be reversed only in the course of the twentieth century.

Nonetheless, it is our impression that in certain periods and areas the process of civilization has the power of successively speeding itself up. Maybe this is the combined effect of the take-off character of learning and of the rising magnitude of exposure connected with population growth and division of labour, particularly with urbanization.[38] It is important to note that this civilizatory take-off preceded the economic one in Sweden. The former no doubt facilitated the latter, i.e. through the reduction in violence and the extension of economic networks, markets, and collective goods associated with the growth in communicative capacity.

To make the connection between civilization and urbanization intelligible, a few words of elucidation are required. At this preliminary state of analysis we can only give a rather stylized outline of our perspective. Before doing that, however, two observations have to be added. First, we are not claiming any general or necessary causal connection between these two processes. Second, even if the urban centres in some periods took the lead in the civilization process, it was continuously evolving also in rural areas.

Life is more anonymous in the city than in the countryside. The scope of manners and habits confronting the urban individual is much wider. This is of course due to the fact that the division of labour is far more developed than in rural areas. It is precisely this everyday experience of more or less strange manners and opinions that gives the communicative learning process its distinct urban qualities.[39] To survive psychically as well as physically, the immigrants into urban areas must find out how to handle situations that no one ever taught them. And that must be done through interchange.

Three successive steps could be distinguished in this learning process. Firstly, the urban novices quickly learn that it is costly, often too costly, to explicitly obstruct alien or even hostile norms and values held by others. Therefore, they sustain their deeply rooted norms by keeping them inside, i.e., they cope by way of assimilation.

Secondly, individuals begin to accommodate to the conditions of urban life. They are successively forced to realize the particularity of their own experiences and attitudes. As a consequence, a state of impersonal tolerance evolves between humans involved in mutual communication. This atmosphere of live-and-let-live is not based on compassion. Rather, it is due to the slowly acquired insight not only of the mul-

tiplicity of world-views, but also of the vanity in persuading others to adopt one's own. In this setting, a decrease in homicide and an increase in free-thinking occurs. And this is also a milieu where it is easier for secularized values to capture the minds of men and women.

The third step should be one where impersonal tolerance has developed into empathy, i.e. where humans have acquired the mental power of imagining the needs of their fellow-beings.

What is here perceived as successive levels of communication could of course also be looked upon as different ways among individuals of coping with traumatic experiences, where still today the second way seems to dominate. Still, we believe that a movement of the centre of gravity towards the third step has indeed accompanied the process of civilization. And however insignificant they once were, it was precisely under the shelter of impersonal tolerance that islands of empatic intercourse could crop up.

Emile Durkheim asserted that the division of labour was crucial to the modernization of society. The continuing division of labour would make people more interdependent. As a consequence, he envisioned the evolution of more peaceful relations between men. Though superficially resembling the Durkheimian approach, our analysis differs from his as regards the precise significance of the secular rise of the division of labour. Its causal significance is not to be found mainly on the economic level, but on the level of social psychology. On one hand, people in the urban space are rather more *independent* of each other than in the village, where the division of labour is less developed. On the other hand, due to the division of labour in the city, exposure to the diversity of the human experience is wider than in the rural areas. In this alternative interpretation, the civilizatory effects of the division of labour are indirect rather than direct.

Independent revivalism is typical of the urban setting, though only a minority of townspeople were to join these movements. One example is Herrnhutism (the Moravian Brethren), which was characterized by a sort of personal tolerance. The Moravian brothers (and sisters) were expected to confess their innermost thoughts to themselves and to each other, and they could count on empathic understanding from their fellow participants.

People of the educated elite – neither the authorities nor the common people – were the first to demand tolerance of a diversity of views (such as freedom of confession, liberty of the press, and the abolishment of the death penalty for sexual crime). This may be due partly to the fact that these persons, through their exposure and experience of migration, had learnt to see the differences among human beings. Another reason lies in their situation as educated people. They read books and had been schooled into critical thinking and into imagining things without actually having seen them applied. Being reflective was easier when alone with the printed word than when listening to preaching. Through education, they learnt to dream about sexual and aggressive impulses, thereby also learning to subdue them.

Both processes – the comparatively detached dealings of the urban economy and the interaction of the educated with each other and with the books – involved new dimensions of communicative learning. They had partly similar effects – tolerance and declining violence – and partly differing outcomes, such as contempt of the educated towards the uneducated. The result was not wholly conclusive, and no process of civilizing is ever won once and for all. For example, impersonal tolerance threatens to turn into impersonal intolerance as soon as large groups feel threatened by other groups. Throughout history such antagonism has been acted out as xenophobic behaviour based on dehumanization of the unfamiliar persons.

If the explanatory sketch given above might seem truistic (rather than false), consider the intricacy of the following analytical circumstances.

In the previous section, two divergent and even apparently mutually exclusive subprocesses were pointed to, though we did not contemplate the analytical tension implied. On the one hand, we assumed a rising outer-worldliness in the eighteenth century, mainly among urban citizens. This tendency was connected with an expansion of the scope of interhuman

exposure. On the other hand, we also interpreted the mentality changes of the eighteenth century as a growth in reflectiveness. This rise in the capacity for introspection was probably due to the strains experienced by people feeling lost in a world of multiplying opinions.

In other words, we delineate a growing outer-worldliness and a growing inner-worldliness as well. Disputable rather than truistic, we believe these findings to be both reconcilable and valid. Our solution can be stated simply: exposure breeds introspection. Man catches sight of himself only when realizing that he is not alone in the world, i.e. only when he becomes aware of himself being a particular being among his fellow-beings.

Notes

1. On Le Bon and early mass psychology, see Nye (1975: 28, 44 ff, 60 ff, 66 ff, 77). On Freud's relationship with Le Bon, see Moscovici (1985: part 6), and Freud (1975: 72–81).
2. However, Moscovici (1985) is one.
3. Especially Muchembled (1985); Sandin (1986: 227 ff); Taussi Sjöberg (1988); Taussi Sjöberg (1990). See also Burke (1984: 7 ff), where he partly drops his perspective in Burke (1978); Stearns & Stearns (1986).
4. For a similar perspective see Boyd & Richerson (1988), especially chapters 1 and 3.
5. Duerr (1985). See also Österberg (1983) for an attempt at evaluating this criticism.
6. Swedish works to be mentioned in this context are Sandin (1986); Ödman (1987); Ödman (1991).
7. Apparent in the works by Michel Foucault, this implicit long term conspiracy is also tangible as a narrative design in many other studies. Some researchers have been aware of this kind of analytical trap, for instance Muchembled (1985: 183).
8. A prominent example in Swedish research is the great economic historian Eli F. Heckscher (e.g., in his *Sveriges ekonomiska historia från Gustav Vasa II: 2* 1949). In international research, Gay (1967–69), is one exponent of this perspective.
9. Gardella (1985). For another example, concerning sexual science in the nineteenth century, see Russett (1989), especially chapter 6.
10. Compare Gardella (1985) with Stearns and Stearns (1986). They describe the same period in the history of the United States. While Gardella focusses on normative sexual liberation, Stearns and Stearns discuss the attempts to confine human aggressiveness.
11. See for instance Landes (1988), who claims that French women were more present and influential in the public sphere during *l'ancien régime* than in subsequent periods.
12. Of course the setback that, at least on the discoursive level, occurred in the nineteenth century cannot be denied. Nonetheless, within a flourishing misogynic atmosphere, decisive steps towards a general recognition of human sexuality were taken, even if temporarily and in certain layers it was denied the female sex. In the long run, however, this recognition appears to have been a precondition also for the subsequent re-establishment of female sexuality. Gay (1984); Nyström (1904); Russett (1989), ch. 6.
13. Millar, John: *The Origin of the Distinction of Ranks* (1779) is reprinted in: Lehmann (1960).
14. With binding values, we refer to those adhered to in practical interaction.
15. Elias vol. 1 (1978: 164 f, concern for the naked body, transformation of nightclothes; 187 relaxation of constraints in relations between sexes, i.e. in bathing manners).
16. For details see Söderberg (1993).
17. Österberg & Lindström (1988). Lindström presents the absolute number of homicide cases but does not calculate rates.
18. Österberg (1991). On trends from 1750 onwards see Hofer (1985). Their national figures do not include infanticide.
19. Calculation based on data in Österberg and Lindström (1988: 79 ff). We estimate the population of Stockholm to 6,000 in the late fifteenth century, to 8,000 in the 1580s, and to 10,000 in the early 1620s. Medieval court records exist only for Stockholm and very few other Swedish towns. For this reason it is impossible to describe national trends that early.
20. This applies also to parts of central Sweden such as Uppland. In Långhundra, for instance, registered homicide drops from 14 per 100,000 in 1545–60 (Österberg 1991: 73) to 8 in 1579–91 (calculation based on Edling, ed. 1941). In Sjuhundra, also in Uppland, this rate declines from 34 in 1601–28 to 8 in 1638–51 (calculation based on Sundelius 1984). See also Larsson (1982: 53 f), on the reduction in violence in parts of Småland from the early seventeenth to the early eighteenth century.
21. Calculated from Berg (1893: 63 f) (period 1545–60); Landin (1963: 113 ff) (period 1620–49).
22. Another reason why the decline as depicted in figure 1 is underestimated is that Lindström's figures (up to 1625) refer only to those convicted. On the other hand, data from 1750 onwards report the number of crime victims (based on causes of death). Of course not all cases of manslaughter led to anyone being sentenced. Consequently, the number of killed will in general exceed the number of convicted, and the early

modern rate based on sentences must be an underestimation.

23. Thomson (1960: 2, 43 note 104). More detailed data in Odén (1875: XX f); Gahn (1915: 24 f).
24. As noted by Crocker (1959: 321 f), the Enlightenment philosophers rarely mention anxiety.
25. The development of writing ability is usually ascribed to the establishment of the compulsory elementary school according to the 1842 Parliament decision. Had this been a sufficient explanation, the ensuing regional variation in writing ability would have been small. In fact the differentials between more and less secularized parts of the country are quite substantial even around 1870.
26. The recent strong revival of the thought of Max Weber of course has strengthened the emphasis on formal rationality, though this would not necessarily play down the importance of ethical change. See Habermas (1984: 248–271).
27. On the practice of cutting off one ear of thieves and burying females alive in late medieval Stockholm see Schück (1940): 268 f, 273. For other instances of mutilation and burning with irons in early seventeenth-century court rolls (*Stockholms stads tänkeböcker*) see J.A. Almqvist, ed. (1931: 108 f, 341); J.A. Almqvist, ed. (1933: 239). In general, there are many instances of court practice being more lenient than the law stipulated. For late sixteenth-century instances of mutilation see, e.g., D. Almqvist, ed. (1951: 12, 42, 59, 81, 330). Brutal punishments such as cutting ears off thieves were sometimes practiced in the country courts during the sixteenth century; see, e.g. Berg (1893: 90); Edling & Svenonius, ed. (1946: 9). The latter also contains one case of burying alive for bestiality (p. 74).

    On later change see Sundin (1991: 10). Sundin, however, rejects the hypothesis of a growth in humanitarian values. He regards justice as mild only insofar as it fulfilled a conflict-reducing function, not because of humanism entering the *Wertrationalität*.
28. Thomson (1972: 340). Munktell (1943: 32 f), notes several brutal retributions that were abolished, in practice if not always in formal law, during the seventeenth century: burial alive (around 1600), cutting off the right hand (in the 1620s), cutting off the ears (around 1630), and burning alive (in 1670). In general, mutilation is practiced only rarely during this century.
29. On the growing disapproval of painful and shameful punishments during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries see Bohlin (1917: 359 ff, 490 f).
30. Fridén (1991) analyzes internal customs materials. He demonstrates a growth of domestic trade and marketing of agricultural products in Sweden, particularly from 1720 onwards.
31. Carlsson (1973). Migration intensity is defined as the sum of out-migration and in-migration deflated by population.
32. Quoted from Gaunt (1977: 194).
33. Jarrick (1992), chapter 3 and unpublished research.
34. For an overview of the research see Lockridge (1984).
35. On French regional dimensions see Lepetit (1986), with references to further literature.
36. Of course, the strong elements of spontaneity of these basic changes do not eradicate the role played by the State in trying to maintain a division of labour based on mercantilistic principles. But mercantilism, upholding an extremely strict division of labour between town and country and between various types of towns, was not unequivocally conducive to the growth of the market. The most important accomplishment of the State probably has been the maintenance – largely successful – of the monopoly of violence, thus upholding law and order.
37. See for instance Luttenberger (1989), chapter 3.
38. Of course, urban population growth cannot proceed indefinitely without provoking forces counteracting the civilizatory forces originally set in motion by the urbanization process.
39. For similar views on the socio-psychological qualities of urban life, see Landes (1988: 39); Perrot (1990: 454).

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