Emancipation and culture

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Summary

This paper presents some comparative data and theoretical fragments concerning the cultural activities of groups involved in a process of emancipation. The ultimate target of this endeavor is the analysis of aspects of contemporary youth cultures. In this report, however, the emphasis is on data on emancipating groups in three other socio-historical contexts, namely bourgeois groups in 18th century Germany; French-speaking intellectuals from Africa in the years immediately preceding and following World War II; and negroes in the United States in the last two decades.

It appears that in their efforts to better their positions vis à vis established elites rising groups show typical changes in their strategies. In the beginning, assimilation prevails: people try to rise by imitating the attributes of the better placed persons. When assimilation fails, an emancipation is bound to follow. In this phase the groups considered show heightened cultural activity, stressing and expressing their inner meaning, common background and general humanity. The ideological catchwords for this movement among the groups I consider are "Kultur", "Négritude" and "Soul" respectively. This period is sometimes followed by one of open conflict, but some sort of integration of the parties will be the end of the total process.

The second phase, emancipation, seems to be especially important if a stagnation in the process occurs, if assimilation is sharply frustrated and (political) combat is for the moment impossible. In that case cultural activities, the playing of expressive role and the construction of new or renewed identities draw most energy and attention. Some sections of contemporary youth seem to be in this situation. The symbolism of their youthfullness, their spontaneity, energy and "regressiveness", provides much of the material for mass-communication and commercial exploitation. This reinforces the ever present danger of "fixation" to this phase.

"Kultur"

The first case to be discussed is that of the rising bourgeois groups in eighteenth-century Germany. The ideological catchword that best conveys the self-justification and solidarity within these groups is "Kultur". In his great study of the civilizing process Norbert Elias places "Kultur" in opposition to "Zivilisation". He points out that — at the time when he wrote his book, the 1930s — the term civilization was understood by Frenchmen or Englishmen as signifying those aspects of their particular societies that they were most proud of. In Germany, however, "Zivilisation"
indicated something somewhat inferior to “Kultur”. With “Kultur” the Germans designated the core of their feelings of national self-respect. Civilization stands for the public aspects of behaviour in the political, economical, or “social” spheres: it indicates the increasing stylization and refinement of patterns of behaviour, or “civil manners”. “Kultur”, however, denotes “matters of the mind”, the “inner life”, and the products in which the labours of the human mind find expression: works of art, books, religious, philosophical, and scientific systems. Civilization indicates the way in which things are done, “Kultur” signifies the “content”, or the product of action.

The contrast between “Kultur” and civilization was at first not primarily national, but social: it reflected the tension between bourgeoisie and aristocracy in the second half of the eighteenth century in Germany. As Elias’ study in its entirety demonstrates, civilization is closely linked to life at court, to the characteristic interpersonal restraint which was necessary there and which eventually came to symbolize the high court status. The court nobility did not “do” much and “produced” nothing. It was a leisure class which used its civilization as a legitimation of its power and status position. The “Bürger” countered this with their own productivity. “Kultur” and civilization are the central terms in a large-scale social debate between bourgeoisie and nobility.

In this debate the bourgeoisie emphasized morality, sincerity and rich inner life as characteristic for themselves. In particular deep emotionality and personality development were brought forward by them as ideals. They criticized life at court for its superficiality, cold rationality, depravity, empty ostentation and artificial refinement of convention and conversation. The aristocracy followed the general European standards of taste and good form, in particular those prevailing at Versailles, and expressed their horror at the vulgarity and provincialism of other social groups. The members of the aristocracy at that time spoke French, or German with many French words, while the bourgeois intellectuals developed and made increasing use of the German language.

The changes in style in the pictorial arts, architecture, music and literature in eighteenth-century Germany display certain parallels. This tendency became unmistakable towards the middle of that century. Balet, who made an extensive study of these changes, speaks of “bourgeoisification”. He regards these developments as a reflection of the relative social strength of the aristocratic and bourgeois groups. The relative weakening of the nobility and strengthening of the bourgeoisie initially began in the economic field, while politics in the eighteenth century still remained almost entirely in the hands of the firsts. The “social” sphere, the sphere of relative evaluation, was at that time particularly the field of competition. Matters of life style and value-orientation constituted the material, the weapons, the criteria.

In the first half of the century the bourgeoisie still oriented itself towards life at court and accepted courtly standards to a high degree as being decisive. The arts were dominated by “absolutism”. Architecture, the pictorial arts and music contain suggestions of space, limitlessness and continuity. In literature and the theatrical arts the stereotyped characters and the attention for stylization and presentation strike us. In the middle of the century a change set in. The bourgeoisie turned away from life
at court to orientate itself more inwardly. In the arts we now see more intimacy, more attention for the human element and less adherence to hard-and-fast rules. Subjectivity, fluctuations in emotional life, personality development and intimate friendship are themes of the literature of the second half of the eighteenth century which mirror the way of life and the aims of the bourgeoisie. The bourgeoisie, which was strengthening its position, placed its deeply felt humanity in opposition to the empty formality of the court nobility. This humanity warranted, in their eyes, equal adjudication at the very least, but the development of it could even lead to bourgeois feelings of superiority.

The sharpness of the contrast between culture and civilization in Germany would seem to be related to the sharpness of the contrast between bourgeoisie and aristocracy in that country. In France, for instance, the distinction between the two was less marked, and the most promising members of the bourgeoisie were not as excluded from life at the court. Possibly this is linked to a difference in competitive pressure as a result of the relative poverty, dispersion and lack of possibilities for expansion in Germany. There are other factors in the German situation, as compared to the French, which recur in the contrast between culture and civilization. France's centralism — the concentration of power and people in Versailles and Paris — added to the importance of interpersonal behaviour, while in Germany the dispersion rendered indirect, "spiritual" communication more important: conversation versus books and letters. 6) The German intellectuals constituted a small class whose members lived in small provincial towns scattered over a large area. Politically powerless, they tried on the one hand to become the equals of the nobility, and on the other to distinguish themselves from the common people. They did this, on their own steam as it were, by cultivating their humanity, their minds and their emotions, by their "Kultur" and "Bildung".

Later on this "social" internal contrast in Germany developed into an opposition on an international scale. While in countries such as France and England aristocratic and bourgeois values mingled, culture and civilization in Germany remained separate, with the former carrying the more weight. The values of "Kultur" with the emphasis on emotionality, a rich inner life, authenticity, the superiority of the spiritual, and a refutation of rationalism, the cultivation of manners and the unnatural restraint of emotion, became aspects of the German "character". A love of the obscure, the profound and matters of the mind; a fearful respect tinged with scorn for social and particularly political matters have contributed to determine the course of German history, with mixed consequences.

Assimilation and emancipation

Later on in his study Elias reverts to the antithesis between civilization and culture. He points out that within the general development of a steadily growing of interdependencies, of the spread of forms of civilization and of a certain levelling of the contrasts between the behaviour of social groups, smaller cyclic developments in the social rising of certain groups occur. He distinguishes here two phases, a phase of "colonization" and "assimilation" and a phase of "refutation", "differentiation" and
In the former the elite spread their models of behaviour and individual members of the still relatively weak, rising groups try to secure a place among the elite by adjusting their behaviour to the standards prevailing there. This often results in somewhat artificial behaviour, because they wish to appear what they are not yet (entirely) capable of being. If the rising group as a whole gains social strength, the rivalry between it and the elite increases. At this point the second phase commences. The elite start to isolate themselves and stress the distinctions in order to stabilize the status quo. The self-awareness of both groups increases. Instead of orienting themselves on the standards of the elite, the members of the rising group start looking for their own values. Thus in their polemic with the aristocracy the bourgeois groups countered the latter's idleness with work, their artificial etiquette with authenticity, their attention for manners with the search for knowledge, their rivalry with virtue. When the social force of rising groups has increased to such an extent that they themselves function as the top stratum, the life styles of the old and new top strata intermingle. A contributing factor here is that both tendencies—the search for equality and the search for distinctions—are present throughout. The phases are characterized by varying accentuation. The strategies of both groups are constantly ambivalent, and these ambivalences give them a certain tension.

Thus we see that certain aspects of culture can be related to the changes in the balance of power of social groups within a system of interdependencies. Both an old and a new elite have, in such situations, various strategic possibilities open to them, so that the tensions of ambivalences, of the repression of alternatives, are always discernable. These are ambivalences of equality and inequality, of correspondence and difference—inhomogeneous in every human situation—but here they are given a specific form. In the first stage, that of colonization/assimilation, inequality and equality are determined and symbolized "externally". Once equality is more within reach, the fear of the elite and the frustration of the climbers increase both. The latter then concentrate more on their inner self, on the externalization of it, directed towards "fundamental" equality which results in a new distinction: equal dignity becomes unique dignity.

"Négritude"

The term "Négritude" is used to indicate the entirety of Negro-African values. The term was first used by students from Black Africa and the French Antilles in the thirties in Paris; initially these values were expressed mainly in poetry, later on more in essays. From these writings a number of values can be distilled which together form a more or less comprehensive, ideological view. A view of the past, the essence and the future of being black, with an emphasis on the cultural aspects. The most important representatives of this way of thinking are L. S. Senghor and A. Césaire, as well as several writers associated with the periodical Présence Africaine. It is remarkable that this way of thinking emerged among French-speaking Africans, and that it never found an equivalent among the English-speaking Africans. This would seem to be directly related to the differences in the colonial ideologies of France and Britain, which may be characterized with the catchwords "assimilation"
and "indirect rule" respectively. Whereas the British carried out their policy in administrative terms with the retention of existing structures, the French defined theirs in terms of civilization and with the centralistic element that characterized French society as a whole. The Négritude way of thinking is a direct reaction to the latter. Its "designers" belong to the small elite of colonized men who were permitted to continue their studies (= assimilation) in Paris. They had strongly idealized France, their stay there and their "assimilation"; but their confrontation with reality and particularly with racism in varying degrees of subtlety, led to bitter disappointment. At first they had deliberately turned away from traditional African culture and had looked for a frame of reference solely in French culture, at least as they saw it, but now they became aware of the impossibility of complete assimilation, which they had hoped to achieve through education. However hard they tried to play the role of the French intellectual or student, the French still saw them in the first place as "Nègres", and often considered their attempts at assimilation to be somewhat ridiculous. They tried to extricate themselves from this impasse, this crisis of identity, in divers ways. One of them was to point to the positive aspects of being black, of "Négritude". Various elements of French culture were contributing factors in this. Value accents in "counter-currents" such as surrealism, Marxism, etc., pointed the way to alternatives to the values of the official policy of assimilation. And scientific research brought forward aspects of African culture such as a glorious past prior to the slave trade, which one could justly be proud of, thus correcting the idea of the cultureless savage, who could only benefit from assimilation.

Initially this reaction was fairly radical, racist and anti-European, but this extremism soon faded. Around 1937 ideas about racial superiority etc. had weakened considerably, and more attention was paid to the unique contribution of Negro culture to world civilization. There was little interest in political and social matters — let alone independence — at that time. The emphasis lay on the culture and the self-respect of the blacks. In spite of their resistance to the assimilation policy they continued to express themselves in terms of French ways of thinking, and addressed a French or at least French-thinking audience. Indeed, "Négritude" was, after its radical inception, quite acceptable in France, and leading figures such as Senghor and Césaire became "established" in official French circles. Their ideas were also welcome to representatives of counter-currents, of whom Sartre was the best known example.

Thus the term "Négritude" is used to indicate characteristics of the soul and culture of black people which are considered to be more or less distinctive as compared to Europeans and the European culture. These characteristics include "emotionality", "rhythm", "participation" and "solidarity"; as opposed to the European reason, technology, lack of feeling and individualism. Senghor states that "la raison noyro-africaine est intuitive par participation" as opposed to "la raison européenne classique", which is "analytique par utilisation". And "le Nègre est l'homme de la Nature". Or, in the words of Fanon: "Dans l'ensemble les chantres de la négritude opposeront la vieille Europe à la jeune Afrique, la raison ennuyeuse à la poésie, la logique oppressive à la piaffante nature, d'un côté raideur, cérémonie, protocole,
scepticisme, de l'autre ingénuité, pétulance, liberté, pourquoi pas luxuriance. Mais aussi irresponsabilité.”

After the war the ideas of “Négritude” were particularly manifest in the periodical Présence Africaine and the publishing house of that name. The main idea was to spread African culture, but also to develop it so that African and European culture might exert a beneficial influence on one another. But alongside this institutionalization the criticism, including that of the young, politically more radical figures and of English-speaking Africans, grew after the war.

The “Négritude” ideology has become associated with the hardly radical policy of its official initiators such as Senghor, who adapted part of his ideas to the needs of his regime in Senegal. Although Senghor’s critics often reject the explicit “Négritude” ideology because of this association, they still often adhere to ideas that are in fact corresponding. But I will not go into the later developments and criticism of “Négritude” in the context of this article.

Emancipation and conflict

Thus it appears that a number of cultural phenomena and ideological value-accents centering on the concept of “Négritude” are similar to those of the “Kultur” of the German bourgeoisie. Here again there is a striking shift in the strategy of the rising “elite of the masses” after their unsuccessful attempt at assimilation. Instead of expecting everything from “external” imitation of elite characteristics, they start looking for self-respect in themselves: they become more introverted, they turn to the past and thus try to find an identity of their own which is valid in itself. While assimilation is often an individualistic attempt to improve one’s position, the building up of an identity of one’s own (emancipation) requires a more collective response. Yet this shift to within, this collective and symbolic seeking for the self lacks potency. Although necessary and useful when seen from a perspective of “dignity”, a fixation to this phase is not very fruitful politically. Franz Fanon expresses this point of view in an essay “Sur la culture nationale”. He distinguishes three stages in the development of the orientations of colonized intellectuals, the first two of which are similar to those of Elias. First there is a “période assimilationniste intégrale”, in which they imitate European culture. Then follows a period of confusion and fear in which they try to find a foothold in the cultural products and mystical past of their own people. This, however, has the danger of immobility, “folklore” and exoticism. The third stage should be a “période de combat” in which the intellectual places himself at the service of the people, in which he appeals to his people to take part in the struggle, and makes himself the spokesman of a new reality of action. This should make an end to the elitism which often emerges in the preceding stages, and the struggle should bring unity to the people. Emancipation has therefore a function in this perspective, but is temporary — it is a preparatory step to the open conflict by strengthening self-confidence. Whether a process in which phases of assimilation and emancipation are discernible is always followed by a stage of conflict depends on all sorts of circumstances. Often the elements of “civilization” and “culture” will eventually intermingle after an alliance between the old elite and
old avantgarde has come about, even without open political struggle. This mixture can then function as a criterion of civilization for a new elite.

"Soul"

If we consider the cultural history of black people in the U.S.A. as reflected in their music, we arrive at a much more complex picture than in the preceding cases. It seems as if tendencies of assimilatory civilization and an emancipatory forming of culture alternated with one another again and again. There were frequent changes in style based on aspects of the preceding civilization and harking back to primordial inspiration, in which the spontaneous, "sound", "drive", "swing" and improvisational inspiration predominated, and each time they were followed sooner or later by an encapsulation into commercial, massive, arranged, civilized forms, whereby the personal, the emotional, as well as the "black" elements were ousted by slick salability, an easy appeal and/or a polished performance.

It is remarkable that in a number of cases these developments did not move in a civilized but in a "savage" direction: exaggerated behaviour in keeping with the stereotypes that whites have about blacks. This technique, applied with varying degrees of awareness of cynicism, may be termed "Uncle Tomism". In a less deliberate and cynical form Uncle Tomism may also be considered a preliminary phase of the rising process as a whole. Then members of the "masses" opt for an identity, or at least an informal role, according to the stereotypes that exist about them among the elite — as for instance the picture of the grinning, childlike Negro, who spends his days in complete "deference" to his Masters. During phases of emancipation this is often reverted to, albeit with a different value accent.

As one of the several possible examples of these shifts we see that the jazz of the early fifties passed through an assimilatory stage, in which civilized values such as the control of emotion and the rational ordering of sounds pushed the traditional "black" style elements into the background, as in the so-called "cool jazz" and "West Coast style". Slowly but surely a reaction to this emerged, which once again provided more opportunity for uncivilized elements such as excitement, strong rhythm, "sound" and expressiveness in general. More "black" elements were now very emphatically brought forward — such as "blues" and "gospelsong" material, and other suggestions of a "country", "down home" atmosphere. Some names for this style and subsidiary tendencies are "hard bop", "funky jazz", "East Coast" and later on in particular "soul jazz".

All sorts of explanations and references at the time conveyed the idea of "goin' back to the roots". Critics later spoke of the "hard bop regression" and considered it to be mainly a coarsening and a diminishing of artistry. This reaction in turn led to various currents. In some cases the "fire" seemed less convincing, more acted and simulated, or at least routinized and conventionalized, and there emerged a somewhat mechanical style of entertainment designed for large audiences. It was especially against this background that the "soul" terminology spread towards the end of the fifties. Another branch continued a more "art oriented" tradition, in which the refinement and elaboration did not exclude emotional expressiveness.
From there a line leads to the present "avant-garde" and "new thing". Alongside these jazz traditions, the "blues" (mainly secular songs with a "down home" atmosphere) and the "gospel songs" (religious songs, "black"-styled successors of the "spirituals") also developed. Moreover there emerged — inspired by "blues", simple jazz and earlier "Uncle Tom" music — a chiefly white, popular "rock-and-roll" music. Finally, in the sixties the so-called "soul music" developed from elements of more urban blues, gospels, soul-jazz and rock-and-roll.

It was for the most part vocal, expressive, primarily emotional, compelling, "black" music. The lyrics contain many references to matters associated with the life of black people in the rural Deep South. The atmosphere is often one of joy and inspiration: "Feelin' good!". There is much emphasis on communication, on "complete communion": "Can you hear me? Yeah!". There is a strong interplay between the singer (usually) and the audience, which is often represented symbolically by a small back-up chorus. This is a direct derivation from "gospel" traditions in a secularized context. It is remarkable that it was precisely those forms that were least "civilized" and the most expressive of solidarity, that were taken over, thus imparting a ritual character to the whole. 14)

Also outside the world of music an extensive "soul" vocabulary has spread among American blacks. What does "soul" really mean? The "concept" is rather vague, but the associations which it appears to evoke are fairly clear: inspired bodily existence; strong, shared emotions; supple, forceful movement; "timing", drive; traditional food; sex; paradoxical, "in-group" communication, "double talk", "signifyin'"; man over machine; pure, honest, true; and a sharing of experience, understanding, and ways of thinking and expression. 15)

"Soul" would therefore seem to convey what those who use the term — for the most part "lower class urban Negroes" — are, or at any rate those elements of their "nature" that they wish to stress. It is precisely the relative vagueness, the reference to shared backgrounds and values, the emphasis on the general above the personal, that makes the "soul strategy" so effective for the strengthening of feelings of solidarity. The emergence of this vocabulary towards the end of the fifties has been interpreted in relation to the expansion of social possibilities which took place — in principle at least — at that time and the resulting feelings of insecurity. 16)

However, some authors doubt the "authenticity" of the "soul movement", especially in relation to soul music; they point to the strongly commercialized use of soul vocabulary and see soul music as little more than commercial entertainment. There are definitely indications for such a point of view, but commercialization seems to have taken over at later stage, and can therefore not be held responsible for the emergence of "soul". And besides, the successful use of symbols points to a felt need for the messages suggested by those symbols. Keil: "The situation that gives rise to the soul strategy really needs no elaboration ... the problem of self-hatred, the lack of self-esteem — the lack of self, for that matter; these form the pervasive and frightening theme, and the variation on it is a deep-seated mistrust of others — black as well as white." "The soul ideology ministers to the needs of identity and solidarity." 17)
Emancipation and identity

The emancipatory activities discussed above display striking similarities in spite of certain differences. Each time we see a rejection of assimilation and that people are not yet ready for conflict. In each case there is a consideration of the values of the group itself, a search for share backgrounds and joy at this new or re-found dignity. This joy sometimes strikes us as somewhat exaggerated. It seems that doubts and ambivalences, remnants of assimilatory internalizations, are suppressed. "Cultural" activities and the playing of expressive roles have the function of exorcizing these doubts, convincing the self, others in the same circumstances, and society.

Cultural activities and expressive roles may be linked to one of the aspects of society as distinguished by Parsons: "Latency" (pattern maintenance and tension management, socialization and recreation, motivation). The other three aspects are "adaptation" (economy and technology), "goal attainment" (polity) and "integration" (social control, stratification). In cultural activities patterns of life are, as it were, developed, symbolized, and ritualized, without actually putting them into operation in "reality" of economy, politics and "society". People in this case use symbols to gain their ends, instead of money, power or "social" sanctions, which are means appropriate for the other spheres. Cultural activities would seem typical of those situations in which an action-potential is available, that cannot be used in an economic, political or "social" way. Expressive roles function as models for the organization of energy with an eye to more extensive action in the future.

The opportunities that are open to people in society depend on the availability of such things as wealth, power or prestige, but also on something like "self-confidence", organized motivation or identity. This is a symbolic construction, which points the direction for action potentialities, which gives sense and meaning to existence and action. It also functions as a defence, against the feeling of being a mere object or of belonging to the chaos, against doubts and despair. This construction comes into being with varying degrees of success in the course of people's development, depending on many circumstances including both the attainment of institutionalized prestige and interpersonal esteem.

The transitions from assimilation to emancipation described above appear to be connected with the impossibility of finding a worthwhile identity in certain situations. Because one lacks an unattainable attribute, one is excluded from a centre of symbolic value. One belongs definitively to another "pseudo species". By accepting this collectively an attempt is made to arrive at an alternative, but equally valuable, centre as opposed to the unattainable official one. By this active acceptance of one's own "pseudo species" the old differences are rendered invalid. This struggle, fought with symbols, also takes place "within" the people concerned. The diverse stages leave their internalized traces. The struggle between these elements of positive and negative identities forms the background of the tensions we spoke of. This "double struggle", personal and social, for an alternative basis of self-confidence and identity, for a new start based on the self, constitutes the core of the process of emancipation. Cultural activities, expressive self-ascertainment and ritual communion are strategic means for this.
Emancipation is a protest against established stratification as well as an attempt to escape from it. The “external elements” of the existing order, which are accepted in the assimilatory phase, are now countered by the “inner” feelings of self-esteem and humanity. But this is done by symbolizing, by “externalizing”. This in turn leads to new institutionalization, standardization, and routinization. Also in the language of spontaneity, a grammar, a syntax, and idiom or even a way of spelling evolve. Every spontaneous urge is expressed in rhetoric and clichés. Cultural activities yield cultural products, by means of participation in culture new methods of distinction are obtained and expressive roles become institutional. By this inevitable routinization of the spontaneous the emancipatory, cultural acceleration is doomed to stagnation: emancipation is a phase.

Youth and mass communications

Among the younger generations — at any rate in Western Europe and North America — a number of phenomena are discernible which display a certain similarity to what we have pointed out earlier as being typical for emancipation (in a stricter sense), such as the emphasis on spontaneity and resistance against rationalism. Today’s youth are as it were passing through two mutually reinforcing emancipations. Firstly there is the individual emancipation, which is described in the literature of developmental psychology with the aid of such a term as adolescence crisis, and secondly there is a collective emancipation, whereby the young rebel against their elders as a generation.

Apart from being stages in a process, assimilation, emancipation and open conflict can also be seen as strategic alternatives in the situation of those who stand outside a centre and who wish to improve their position in relation to it. Successive generations of young people do not always opt for the same alternatives. In the past decade the preference seems to have shifted from assimilation to emancipation or conflict. Ten years ago most youth could be described as “new adults”, who were oriented towards the society of adults in anticipatory socialization. A considerable proportion of today’s youth turn away from this and oppose the life-style of the “gerontocracy” with alternative forms. This tendency appears, to my mind, to be an expression of a changing balance of power between the generations. Other contributing factors here are: the disappointment about the failure to realize generally proclaimed values and ideals, the taking for granted of divers attainments and an improved distribution of education and information. Many young people now explicitly and very emphatically place values of youthfulness in opposition to the central standards of their elders such as experience, knowledge, specialized expertise, restraint, deferred gratification, diligence, authority, law and order. This protest is in turn often condemned by older generations as proof of irresponsible self-indulgence and immature irrealism. Older people often define their responsibility in terms of an existing order, whereas young people do so with an eye to general values and ideals.

The counter-movement of the young takes a variety of forms. Where the emphasis lies chiefly on personal liberation, as among the hippies, the parallel with the emancipation
reactions is the strongest. Other groups tend to move in the direction of open conflict. Participants in the former variants are concerned with the development of the self and expansion of consciousness, while outsiders may tend to wield terms such as social regression or collective narcissism. 24) These motives are also to be found in the bourgeois “Kultur” in the second half of the eighteenth century. Now too its translation into symbols, works of art or ritualized enactments of expressive roles, appears to be very exploitable commercially. Many cannot afford to indulge in an unrestricted regression of an ego-maniacal narcissism, even though they do feel a certain need to do so. These needs can be satisfied to a certain degree by a symbolic identification with poets, soul men or pop idols. This symbolic gratification is open to exploitation via mass media. This often is accompanied by a change, however, a polishing or coarsening, whereby both regressive and revolutionary temptations are diverted and channelled into “latency” and “leisure”.

Mass exploitation of emancipation-culture can obstruct the transition to a stage of conflict. By the amused, slightly derogatory tolerance of regressive and aggressive youthfulness the political aspect is kept latent: “repressive tolerance” is applied. By partial satisfaction of narcissistic impulses and emancipatory needs — but now in a context of weekend activities and with a touch of “civilization” — assimilation is reverted to, and intermingling is undertaken without conflict: an expressively, youthfully adorned “beat” or “soul” band is often accompanied — audibly but invisibly — by middle-aged violin players.

NOTES

1) This is an interim report on a research project in progress. An earlier version was presented at the 1970 Spring Conference of the Dutch Sociological Association. I received very helpful comments at that time, and afterwards from friends as well. The version given here was prepared for the 7th World Congress of Sociology, Varna, Bulgaria, as a contribution to the theme “Youth Culture and Social Alienation” of the Research Committee: Sociology of Mass Communication.

2) Terms like “emancipation” and “culture” are rather vague and I will not define them rigorously in this paper. I use them in an “open”, suggestive manner. Emancipation generally points to a struggle to free oneself of a dependence relation. I use it also in a more limited sense when I speak of the emancipation phase where psychological aspects such as self-confidence are especially in focus. The term culture is used chiefly as explicit culture: pointing to formulated conceptions, expressed values and the like as in science, art, literature and music.


4) A distinction in spheres as here is not without difficulties. “Social” is used here in a special, more limited sense pointing to mutual valuation of partners in a relation and not so much to instrumental aspects. One can also think of the Parsonian “integration problem”; see note 18.

5) Leo Balet, with E. Gerhard, Die Verbürgerlichung der deutschen Kunst, Literatur und Musik im 18. Jahrhundert. Strassburg, etc. 1936.
In this study a lot of useful material and suggestive interpretations can be found. The summary I present here is very sketchy indeed.


Although this model seems a good description of the Bürger-case and fits other cases as well, I don’t suggest that assimilation is always followed by emancipation as an “iron necessity”. This depends on circumstances, especially on the strategy chosen by the elite vis à vis social climbers. Closing the ranks to keep them out is not always done, nor does it seem wise in the long run.


Conversations with De Jonge on his research were one of my major inspirations to undertake the present project.

Another source is:


17) J. Goudeblom, High and Low in Society and in Sociology, Paper for the 7th World Congress of Sociology.


