

# GYMNASTIC EXERCISES, OR “WORK WRAPPED IN THE GOWN OF YOUTHFUL JOY”: MASCULINITIES AND THE CIVILIZING PROCESS IN 19TH CENTURY HUNGARY

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## The Subject and its Context

The aim of this article is to highlight how masculine dispositions have changed in the course of the civilizing process, and how a major drive for change—modern man—was born in the 18–19th centuries. On the basis of Hungarian data it is intended to point to some universal traits of this process. The overriding thesis is that masculine behavioural patterns were channelled into new directions: the drive to fight, to kill the enemy was gradually built upon by competitive and, later, by co-operative dispositions. It is argued that various existential conditions produce different habituses, which can be transferred to diverse areas of practice. Consequently, sports—duelling, fencing, hunting, horse racing, rowing, gymnastics, athletics, cycling and football—might be regarded as indicators that show the changing behavioural patterns of different social groups.

My inquiries are based on two mutually adaptive “great narratives”: Norbert Elias’ civilization theory and Pierre Bourdieu’s sociology. What differentiates my position from that of these two giants is that I ascribe distinguished importance to specificities derived from the continuously changing patterns of masculinity. This is possible on the basis of adopting the main canon of men’s studies—according to which masculinity is a culturally and historically conditioned changing social phenomenon.<sup>1</sup> In other words, the article belongs to the area of *relational disposition sociology* investigating the long-term transformation of the “structured structures” of lasting non-conscious behavioural patterns manifest in continuous improvisations during the everyday practice and perceivable in bodily traits.

Elias drew a parallel between the “parliamentarization” of the squire and the “sportization” of leisure-time, saying that the people who sent the deputies to the parliament pursued sports in one another’s company, motivated by similar *habitus* components irrespective of their political orientation.<sup>2</sup> His argument also warns that it would be ill advised to take parliamentarianism as the cause and sporting customs as the effect, as both phenomena are conditioned by the same structural specificities of 18th century English society. Bourdieu expresses essentially the same relation in the following way: “various existential conditions produce different habituses, which can be simply transferred to diverse areas of practice.”<sup>3</sup>

In the following, by comparing gymnastic exercises with rowing and fencing, I do not intend to suggest that one stemmed from the other, or that there is some causal relation between them. In other words my work remains at the

level of sociological ideal-types. At the same time, historical events, facts and relations are indispensable sources of the discussion. The statements are based on empirical historical-sociological research carried out using an inductive logic: in the course of the research, I analyzed as many of the available sources and data as possible in order to find which leisure-time activities were the most typical and frequently pursued in various periods in the upper strata of 19th century Hungarian society. My data and sources were primarily qualitative: memoirs, diaries, correspondence, publications and press coverage of important people of the times.

In my book I ascribed great significance to the emergence and changes of organizational frames. When, for example, a source indicated that a group of aristocrats established a share-holding company with the intent of introducing horse racing, and, related to that, I found many entries in the diary of one of the leading Hungarian aristocrats about horse racing, let alone a whole book about horses which was later responded to by another aristocrat, I deemed this amount of information sufficient to interpret horse racing as a salient activity, even though in the 1830's there were fewer than ten races each year. Or, when based on a *monographic elaboration of the press* of a period I found that rowing clubs mushroomed to such an extent that the largest number of sports unions at a given time in Hungary were rowing clubs, then the question appeared self-evident: what lay behind this institutionalization? Why did these sports unions arise, what do these different groups express, and, ultimately, what effect did they have in the transformation of masculine dispositions?

My aim is, however, not to outline Hungarian specificities in a comparative context, but to explore what is universally European in these specificities. I wish to sketch the general model of the emergence of modern-time European masculine dispositions on the basis of this particular sample: I am intrigued by the social genesis of modern man. This explains why I ignore questions such as: compared to Germany, why gymnastics have less importance in Hungary, or, why did cycling spread earlier or later (if ever) in other countries, or again, why certain sports activities which are pursued in other places (bull fighting, badminton, sailing, rugby, etc.) did not take root in Hungary.

Since my inquiry concentrates on the long term changes of masculine dispositions, I did not examine the afterlife of the activities studied. According to one of my central theses, masculine dispositions were channelled into new directions in Western and Central Europe from the late 18th century onwards: the drive to fight, to kill the enemy were gradually built upon by competitive masculine dispositional patterns. I wished to verify this thesis by analysing, among others, the transition from hunting to fox hunting, then to horse racing and rowing. If I had conceived a historical work, I would be rightly charged that the activities I declared "superseded" did not vanish from social practice, as people still hunt to this day, and indeed hunted even more extensively in the late 19th century. True, but the social importance of hunting at the turn of the 20th century was nowhere near that of a hundred years earlier, as the aristocrats and middle-class gentlemen, at that time, took part in far more athletic activity, cycling or even football in their leisure time.

As is known, Elias studied centuries-long processes in the vast West Euro-

pean region, the activities analyzed ranging from behaviour at table through nose-blowing and sexuality to battlefield behaviour. Aiming to write about the “deeper unity” and “common keynote” of national traditions, and the “unified affective regulation” “despite the diversity of national schemes” which is still (in the mid-20th century) felt to be “the common heritage of the West”, Elias represents a position which focuses on the convergent features of the phenomenon studied instead of the divergences of the parts.<sup>4</sup> How far can the relevance horizon of the present study be stretched, then, if its subject is far narrower than Elias’, restricting the *historical period* at issue to the 19th century, the *social space* to Hungary and the *activities* to (pre-) sports?

In my opinion, a study of this kind may produce significant methodological gains: if we succeed in proving that the theory of the civilizing process can be applied feasibly to specificities of 19th century Hungarian society, we may test four possibilities of verifying Elias’ paradigm and corroborate the almost peerlessly strong relevance of the theory. First, if we presume that our subject is a *random sample* the success of our undertaking may prove the *homogeneity of Elias’ theory*. Second, if the subject is conceived as a deliberately chosen *restricted sample*, not examined by Elias, our analysis might be interpreted as the verification of the *expansiveness of his theory*. Third, if our subject is seen as a *concentrated sample* (compared to Elias’ broad spatial and temporal horizon) our research may verify the *density of his theory*. If, finally, we stress again that key bourdieusien concepts and the outcomes of the new men’s studies have crucial importance in our work, a fourth aspect may be added to the above three. In that case, the examination of 19th century Hungarian sports not only affords the possibility to verify the homogeneity, expansiveness and density of Elias’ paradigm but it may also contribute to answering further questions posed with the help of other paradigms. If convincing answers are given to our basic questions, then we shall have provided verification of the *flexibility of Elias’ theory*, i.e. its *compatibility with other theories*. In other words: combining Elias with Bourdieu and the new men’s studies may imply not only paradigm expansion but also *paradigm synthesis*.

### Gymnastic exercises vs. rowing and fencing

“Cultured people have many other gymnastic exercises and games which were originally devised for physical strengthening. They are all fragments from our ancestors’ muscular efflorescence and from the ancient world of the Greeks. These fragments, however, are only prevalent in certain regions and certain classes of the population, and are practiced only rarely: therefore they cannot be regarded as tools of national education customary for all, but as rare festivities and pastimes. Consequently, they are non-existent for millions: and if we ignore here the ‘idle walks’ and journeys on foot, for the majority of the people there are only card games and the night’s rest as a source of recreation. For, where is a nation that has public national institutions for the strengthening of physical man or public festivities designed for similar purposes?”<sup>5</sup>

The credit for the introduction of gymnastic exercises into Hungary in an organized form is due to a Frenchman, Ignác Clair, a former captain of Napoleon’s guards who arrived in Pest in the mid-1820s.<sup>6</sup> In the early 1830s he held train-

ing sessions in his own gymnastic institute for both boys and girls. This school was converted into the Gymnastic Society in 1839. As the Society's yearbook for 1852 reveals, between 1839–1851 the number of boys and girls who attended the training sessions were 1326 and 497 respectively, and 53 people were trained to become instructors. A total of 108 people attended the school in the first year. The number of pupils gradually increased: in 1842 there were 150, in 1848 171, in 1852 (after a slight drop) 184. Clair's institute was opened in the garden of a house in the Theresia district on the outskirts, so it was not in the city centre. "Exercising" did not go on all day but only between 6–8 pm, for women on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, for men on the other days.<sup>7</sup> In this period, there was only one similar institution in Hungary: the Fencing School (founded in 1824).

The two most prestigious positions of the "directing board" of five were held by two aristocrats: Count Manó Zichy as patron and Baron Gábor Prónay as director. The three other members of the directing board plus all the members of the "general board" of twenty-three were however of middle class origin. Typically enough, only one general board member had a Hungarian name: the famous fencing master of later years, József Szekrényessy. The others all had German names. The 22 *share-holders for life* who set up the foundation included 12 counts and barons from great historical families—from Barthyánys through Széchenyis to Zichys. The largest investment was made by Count Manó Zichy at 1000 pengő forints. Most of the others offered 200 forints. The rest of those making endowments—five of them with German names—were not aristocrats. They also included the municipality of Pest<sup>8</sup>.

Those who owned just one share each (worth 10 pengő forint) numbered 115. Among them, only three had the title of count or baron (as well as a concomitant Hungarian name). 15 of the remaining 112 had Hungarian names, the rest being foreigners, mostly German. All this adds up to confirm that the Gymnastic Society was already basically an institution of the middle class. This holds true even if it is accepted that the decisive role in its establishment (together with the creation of the necessary financial basis) was played by the aristocracy—just as that of the Fencing Institute.

Although the literary and pedagogical initiatives to introduce gymnastic exercises as collective sport preceded the institutionalization of rowing and fencing, the two other emerging new sports of the period by nearly a century, the beginnings of its organized practice coincided with these of rowing and fencing. Besides, unlike duelling and fox hunting, which practically ceased in Hungary from the 1920s onwards, and hunting and horse racing which later were not considered to be sports in a strict sense, these three activities proved suitable to crystallize as modern sports after a course of rationalization and standardization.

The major function of the duel, an earlier form of fencing, was to maintain and defend the honour of a nobleman and his family. In historical terms, this offered a "side door" for the archaic masculine drive to fight in an increasingly more civilized and rationalized world through which these urges can still be satisfied for some decades, thus assisting the harmonious transformation of the dispositions as much as possible. Fencing, by offering the illusion of a duel, was a prosthesis, expressing both gentlemanly conduct and elevated virility. In this activity masculine honour became civilized into masculine posture, indicating that an

inheritable, traditional, morally embedded activity gradually transforms into a self-controlled modern social institution. While the aim of duelling was to take satisfaction for a stain on masculine pride via the annihilation or wounding of the adversary, revenge is replaced by an almost wholly stylised presentation in fencing. The fencing schools, founded during the first part of the 19th century, were already public, autonomous, independent and legitimate organizations providing a suitable frame and form for the acquisition and routine practise of a repeated and rationally carried on activity.<sup>9</sup>

Although originally the boat-related pastimes of the aristocracy served adventure and amusement to a large extent, the structure of the activities of horse and boat races was practically identical. Implying low risk, both were staged on the basis of the principle of fair play; both have contestants starting side by side under identical circumstances and heading towards a common goal. However, rowing was a less exclusive activity than horse racing, hence its practitioners soon included people from ranks below the aristocracy. By civilizing hunting to horse-racing from the mid-19th century onwards, the aristocracy frees the spirit of competition from the bottle for good, allowing for the middle classes, regarded as their allies in the given historical-political context, to take part in the game under identical conditions. Thus, rowing competitions can be interpreted as manifestations of masculine dispositional rivalry between middle-class citizens and aristocrats. The representatives of these two social classes could match their competence in a struggle where the dispositional arsenal of the middle classes ensures a more favourable outcome.

The most evident feature common to gymnastic exercises, rowing and fencing—which becomes obvious if we compare them with horse racing, one of the most preferred leisure-time activities of the highest social strata in the first part of the 19th century—is that they are human sports. In addition, they are more tightly bound to individualistic body building ideologies. In all three sports from the very beginning the communities (mainly clubs, societies and unions) founded for their cultivation were flexible enough not to exclude members of other social groups. In their foundation an essential element was rallying in the spirit of class solidarity based on the extension of rights: the aristocratic founders of the Pest National Fencing School spelled out in the Rules in 1824 that pupils “can only be admitted from the middle class”.<sup>10</sup>

Another important common characteristic of fencing, rowing and gymnastic exercises is the far smaller risk implied by them as compared to earlier activities such as hunting. In these sports there were no physical contacts between the participants, so violence was only present symbolically (as in fencing). In addition, all require (self) discipline, tolerance of monotony, and self-denial, that is the capability to suppress immediate needs. (However, gymnastic exercises—as will be seen—differ in this regard from the other two, as they tend to eliminate not only fighting but also immediate rivalry from its repertoire.)

A further element shared by these newly emerged sports is their relatively low degree of standardization. (This is particularly obvious when we compare them with their later crystallized forms. Just think of the differentiation of various fencing categories: sword, foil, epee, the diversification of rowing by boat type, or modern gymnastics by apparatus!) In the first half of the 19th century not only was the duration of a sports event was not fixed (no one could fore-

see how long a gymnastic demonstration, rowing or fencing match would last) but the spatial parameters of the venues were also undefined. It was also uncertain whether an event was to be held indoors or outdoors. At the same time all three had the modernizing potential required for their transformation—hence standardization—which is to be stressed in our contexts.

Let us examine the major differences!

Gymnastic exercises can be considered as a kind of umbrella sport; or to be more precise, in the first half of the 19th century when the term “sport” was yet as little used in the European continent, gymnastics and gymnastic exercises meant for most people what we today understand by the word sport. Its protagonists took it for granted that rowing and fencing—and practically all systematic movement aimed at developing the human body—were part of gymnastics. Characteristically enough, Ignác Clair taught not only gymnastics but also fencing:

“The gymnastic institute of Mister Ignác Clair ( . . . ) in which both boys and girls can learn on separate days various physical movements and training of strength with great success and usefulness for their health. They can combine gymnastic exercises with fencing, of which Mr Clair is also a master.”<sup>11</sup>

But while fencing and rowing were practised relatively rarely, gymnastic exercises came gradually into the focus of the middle-class citizen’s way of life. Thus, this activity can rightly be interpreted as a good indicator of the body politics of the emerging middle classes.

Fencers fight, rowers compete with each other. However, even if we accept that there is a gap of civilization between fighting and competition we should also take into account that both of these sports can only be practised in the company of other participants. No one can fence against himself, nor can a boat race be held without rivals. In this respect, gymnastics is definitely different, as the elements of both fighting and rivalry are mostly absent. In the mid-19th century, gymnastic exercises denote the collective body-building and training exercises carried out in the presence of a *master* or *instructor*. In a gymnastic society a person’s qualities are usually not defined against another’s strength, dexterity, speed because a gymnast competes primarily against him- or herself. The main concern of the activity is defined in comparison with the gymnasts’ past condition or potential future state. The practitioners of gymnastic exercises wish to “establish and maintain” their health by “purposeful work”, via exercises aiming at “endurance, strength, dexterity and physical beauty”—to cite the journal *Honművés* again.

The activity is most clearly separated from all other newly emerged sports and traditional pre-sports by its practitioners being mainly children and not adults. By definition, gymnastics is “work wrapped in the gown of youthful joy”. In other words, *work* is done by children under the guidance of a tutor as master. The mentioning of joy is nothing, just an excuse for legitimating the adults’ will.

### The Enlightenment and the spiritual sources of gymnastic exercises

A nobleman wields the sword out of pride and masculine virtue; the instrument is the symbol of his nationality and nobility, his desired and real power, and



even of his own and his nation's independence. He is guided by his traditional feudal way of life embedded in the national past when he decides to acquire the art of fencing. It would never occur to him not to learn the tricks of this weapon. Even if he employs a fencing master of foreign origin (who teaches him the use of the stabbing foil instead of the cutting sword) he is convinced that he follows the Hungarian national fencing traditions. (It is no accident that he engages Italian or French fencing masters, as this decision is compatible with his hostility against Austrians.) Rowing, on the other hand, appears to be an imported gaudy extravagance for him, the aping of fashion-mongers, nothing more than a new Anglo-maniac vagary. This provincial attitude is mocked in *Honderű* in the following way:

"Your Excellency the County Judge Mr Retrograde walked all along the Danube bank in Pest. Mr Retrograde belongs to the national *flâneurs* who come to a halt whenever he sees a new thing, puts his left leg forward, leaves his right hand in the pocket of his trousers, wags his head a few times saying: well I never. and walks on. During his stroll through Pest our friend reached the Boat House. Boat-house, eh? What nonsense can that be? ( . . . ) What's that for? Who lives in it? ( . . . ) Would it were in my village, in Nádudvar, we could at least bathe the sheep in it."<sup>12</sup>

The reference horizon of gymnastic exercises is far more complicated than that of the other two (and, we may add, of the other pre- sports). It is therefore worth taking a closer look at it, with emphasis on a few less well known components of its history. From May 8, 1836 successive issues of *Honművész*, one of the leading Pest cultural weeklies, carried reports about Ignác Clair's "gymnastic institute". The author embeds the information about "gymnastics exercises" in an intricate context.

"It has been the main objective of education for centuries to have a sound mind in a sound body. '*Gymnastica in corpore sano bonum habitum generare conature*'. ( . . . ) To establish and maintain health needs purposeful work. Gymnastic exercises are work wrapped in the gown of youthful joy ( . . . ); they are a system of exercises that are aimed at endurance, strength, dexterity and physical beauty." (My italics, M.H.)<sup>13</sup>

The Latin citation, the concept of man as an indivisible synthesis of "sound body" and "sound mind", the stress on "purposeful work" and "physical beauty" make it obvious that we have a typical dissertation showing the imprints of the Enlightenment. Should there still be doubts about the references, the cited authors would banish them immediately. The most frequently cited name is that of Rousseau, followed by the "Greeks of yore". The reference to the Greek tradition is part of the neo-classical attitude defined in terms of aesthetic and moral ideals in the name of which the Hungarian poets and artists of the early 19th century populated their poems and pieces of art with Greek deities, nymphs, driads and fauns. One of them, Ferenc Kazinczy declared: "the work of an artist created in Greek taste withstands the siege of time laughing." On the basis of these references one may presume that Clair had the children do physical exercises introduced by Pestalozzi and the philanthropic tradition. This repertoire of

movement included (ball)games, military marching exercises, dance, wrestling and mental exercises. And, obviously, fencing.

Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi (1746–1825), Swiss pedagogue, created the “elementary gymnastics” as part of the general system of education. In his *Elementar-gymnastik* published in 1807 he grouped the exercises by the possible movements of the joints. He was the first in Europe to get schoolchildren to carry out a string of stylized exercises. These exercises, however, were only meant as tools of improvement. He conceptualized the personality of the child as an entity, and his exercises were aimed at helping the rational will overpower “physical instincts”. As a follower of Rousseau, he wished to contrast natural movements with the artificial, affected habits of pampered weaklings that spread in society. Like his master, he also wrote pedagogical novels (*Leonard and Gertrude*, *Christof and Elsa*), and as an advocate of general education, he made efforts to have as many children as possible do his exercises simultaneously.

Philanthropy was the joint pedagogical product of English, French and German Enlightenment. The philanthropists involved in realizing physical education at school based the core of their movement system on classical Greek physical culture complemented with remains of folk and children’s games involving movement as well as some elements of military activities and working processes. In their stock of movements, three major groups are differentiated: games, working exercises to improve manual skills, and the physical exercises proper.

As we can see, gymnastic exercises constitute a kind of umbrella sport covering all kinds of physical movement. And even more! If one reads the notes in *Honművészt* with due attention, you will find that gymnastic exercises went further than just postulating the individual as a mental and physical entity; it was also part of this sports’ integrative program to supersede individual physical and mental characteristics, shifting towards the national community:

“In nearly every large town things went so far as to deem natural physical movement and exercise unbecoming. This situation is, however, improper for a nation that lays claim to manliness. Therefore, the main aim of gymnastic exercises is to persuade the youth about its importance, otherwise our nation will be exhausted physically.”<sup>14</sup>

As this quotation reveals, “national” almost unequivocally corresponds to “manliness”. It is not a single accidental usage, as “manliness” occurs frequently in the text in accentuated places. Just to cite an example:

“It is the parents’ duty to guide their offspring’s senses in such a way that their minds and bodies be strengthened in a *manly way*. The best tool is gymnastics, which lures the pupil to the open, where he will not care for rain, wind, heat, cold during the execution of useful exercises. His nerves, muscles, skin will be steeled; all the physical ills will be alleviated; he will learn to feel the so-called manly pride; he will come to like the tribulations of life with manly patience and ability, for he will not only learn to endure but also find pleasure in the exercise of his strength in this persistency. ( . . . ) Pampered boys are slaves when grown up. Get rid of the carnal pleasures, accustom your children to tolerate tough food, hunger, thirst, frost and heat. It is only that way that how the mind’s ambition will be *powerful and virile*.” (My italics: MH)<sup>15</sup>



As regards the context of this concept, the quotation—presumably from Rousseau—included in the publications is highly illuminating. Notably: “*toutes les passions sensuelles logent dans des corps efféminés; ils s’en irritent d’autant plus, qu’ils peuvent moins les satisfaire. Un corps débile affaiblit l’âme*” (my italics, M.H.). *Honművész* translated the word *efféminé* with a Hungarian term meaning “softness” instead of the figurative “feminization”. Though the translation blurs it, it cannot erase the fact that eventually the definition of masculinity was formulated in contradiction with femininity, and the latter’s certain connotations shifted into the meaning of softness or enervation. However, since in the early 18th century women were so totally absent from public life that this gender discrimination remained in the dimension of preconscious routine automatism of thinking.

That does not mean to say that the linguistic formulae derived from the connotations of “feminine” did not imply other, more or less hidden meanings. Just note how the statement in *Honművész* after the French citation continues.

“One feature of the masculine character ever more weakened by our way of living is a wise trust in our own power which does not let us shout for help immediately or fall into despair. This must be the basis for smaller or greater undertakings and is indispensable for us *human beings and bourgeois* to preserve a certain degree of autonomy. I leave it to the kind reader to decide whether this manly characteristic can sprout and develop in the soil of effeminate education.” (My italics: MH)<sup>16</sup>

No doubt about it: this is the voice of the middle class citizen who does not merely take the liberty, explicitly including himself, too, to enunciate from the position of the repository of the nation’s future envisioned as manly, but who also marks himself off from the aristocracy. There can be no doubt in this context that the “effeminate” bodies signify—similarly to Rousseau’s or contemporary Hungarian magnates’ writings—the feeble and inapt body of the nobleman which is becoming increasingly formless in all senses of the word. In other words, peeping out from behind the pace-setting liberal aristocrats, the strengthening bourgeois cautiously opposes the “Sybaritic” nobility. (It is to be stressed that all this is done very carefully. That is perhaps why the Hungarian translation of the French text is far more moderate than the original.) Taking into account other elements of the context of the publications, it becomes even more obvious that the voice of the bourgeois is heard here. Typically enough, the author puts his topic in an expressly pedagogical context: turning against the “small-minded men of education,” he presents himself as protagonist of pedagogical reform. He also attempts to sum up the kind of body exercises being pursued in each country of Europe at the time. Among “political celebrations” he names “target shooting”, “bird-shooting”, “carousel-riding”, “horse-racing”, “bull-fight”, “running races”, “racing by cart and on water”. The author also names “knightly exercise” (horse-riding and fighting) and “body-training games”. It is fashionable, he continues, for Germans to go bowling, for the English to play cricket, the Dutch to play games with sticks. Wrestling in Switzerland and Russia, and swimming in areas with streams also belong here.” And he goes even further. As against the almost exclusive legal and moral philosophical or sometimes economic arguments of contemporary thinking among the nobility, he takes serious steps towards the natural scientific, more precisely medical legitimacy of his subject.

This specificity is remarkable because *Honművész* is a popular weekly magazine in which the ideas had to be worded in easily comprehensible language. In spite of that, dozens of citations can be quoted such as “a noted physician said”, “generally speaking—said Ackermann—a sedentary way of life is the source of all illnesses doctors call *cachectics*, which are numerous. To them belong anaemia, hepatitis, atrophy, worms, *Flechten*, hardness of the bowels, bleeding, dropsy, and so on.” Or again: “In our country hypochondria, says Zimmermann in his work about experience (part II, vol. 4. p. 293), causes half of the chronic diseases.” It is also typical to divide the body on the basis of rational, quantitative elements: “Our body has 249 bones and more than 450 muscles; most of them are movable. The latter partly work alone, partly in union so as to bring variety to movement. The work of the muscles thus has infinite variety, but it is not automatic but is governed by volition.”<sup>17</sup>

Locke, Rousseau and the philanthropists and humanist pedagogical schools translating their ideas into practice spread ever wider in Hungary in the late 18th century, playing especially decisive roles in the private tuition of aristocratic offspring. John Locke's *Thoughts on Education* published in 1693 appeared in Hungarian only eighty years later, in 1771; there were only thirty years between Rousseau's *Emile* (1762) and its Hungarian version (1796).<sup>18</sup> The doctor and teacher of Jena Christof W. Hufeland's *Macrobiotics*, a Rousseauian work of far less impact written in German (1796) was followed by its Hungarian version only two years later (1798).<sup>19</sup> By the standards of the time the work was a best-seller. Hufeland writes:

“Movement adequate for the body is the main foundation of health, of continuous recreation, of the durability of the body, and these are prevented by just sitting and thinking. The drive to move the body is just as natural to man as is the desire for food and drink. Just take a look at any child: sitting is the greatest torture for him. (. . .) There is evidence that people who regularly exercised in the open air for long periods lived longest. That is why travelling, hiking, riding, moderate dancing and other physical exercises are useful, and it would be imperative to imitate the ancient people in this regard who appreciated and used this majestic tool of health.”<sup>20</sup>

Hufeland's book was translated into Hungarian by a physician of Pest, Mihály Kováts, indicating that in the mediation of the spirit of the enlightenment the new intellectual stratum also played an important role. Four years later, in 1802, another Hufeland work appeared in Hungarian, entitled: *Good advice for mothers about the main points of children's physical education*. It was translated by László Ory Fábíán, who dedicated the work to the “right honourable Dame Ilona Cserei of Nagyajta, the wife of the right honourable Baron Miklós Wesselényi of Hadad”.<sup>21</sup>

The introduction of the spirit of the enlightenment into Hungary can be exemplified by publications written by certain aristocrats for the education of their own children, with reference to—and often lengthily citing from—the great authors. Two works influenced by Locke can be mentioned: Count György Fesetich edited a publication in 1799 entitled *A plan for the education of my son*, in which physical education is given prominence,<sup>22</sup> and Count László Teleki's *Ad-*

*vice for the bringing up of children* written in 1796 and meant for his son's tutor. It is noteworthy that as László Ory Fábrián, he also presented his work to Countess Ilona Cserei. The first part of the tripartite work is devoted entirely to physical education.<sup>23</sup>

The cited examples indicate that the ideas were not only borrowed indirectly through the channels of professional literature, but also spread directly and informally, within the societal life of kinship and class relations, as well as other direct contacts. An example is that in Zsolca in Borsod county, Colonel Miklós Vay engaged a young graduate of the Sárospatak College, János Váradi Szabó, to visit Pestalozzi's Institute in Switzerland and after his return educate the Vay children on the basis of what he was to learn there, but in a "national spirit". Váradi Szabó returned with a Pestalozzi pupil, Vilmos Egger, who was first the tutor of the young aristocrats and later, upon the initiative of Vay and Váradi Szabó, the first teacher of physical education in Pest, actually in the Lutheran Grammar School, a school that showed great affinity to the subject.<sup>24</sup>

These examples might hopefully illustrate that the comparatively wide spread of knowledge about Enlightenment and physical education was not exclusively attributable to the aristocracy's efforts. As the examples of László Ory Fábrián, the physician Mihály Kovács and János Váradi Szabó show, the emerging bourgeoisie as well as intellectuals as experts took their share in producing and disseminating knowledge. (This statement can be given more weight by referring to the significant Hungarian pedagogues of the turn of the 19th century from Sámuel Tessedik to András Fáy, who made important contributions not only in the practice of education, as founders of schools, but also as the authors of key works.)

### Aristocracy vs. middle classes

The aristocrat had a position of power in society; hence it was not in his interest to reshuffle the power relations fundamentally. Believing that he was unassailable it only rarely occurred to him to use his body as a (competitive) tool or as a part of a long-term strategy aiming at social mobility. Its "steely" hardness was a compulsion to prove his worth, stimulated incessantly by masculine pride rooted in his family's past. This pride was the source of his excitability, his "desire to bicker" also objectified in constant challenges for duelling or hunting. Let us refer to the above-mentioned Wesselényi family as an example!

Baron Miklós Wesselényi Sr. (1754–1820) was mentioned by his contemporaries as the "fierce Wesselényi". (Remember that Hufeland's *Good advice for mothers . . .* was dedicated to his wife by the translator!) He was a "violent, passionate and hot-blooded" nobleman, who "didn't obey anybody, spent his time with horses and overheated revelries", and "showed the highest level of temper." When younger he simply abducted his future wife from her convent school. Between 1769–1778 he served in Galicia and was promoted to the rank of captain, but after a joke he had played on a district administrator was expelled from military service. He was a man of great bodily strength, a famous fencer and horseman.

Wesselényi Sr. was an ardent 'believer in the ideas of freedom, which caused

conflict with his neighbour, Count Haller, who was of a “very royalist character”. To express his dislike, he found a reason for formally declaring war against Haller. For this act he was sentenced to four years in prison by Joseph II. From 1791, after his release, he supported liberal ideas in the Transylvanian diet and was one of the leading figures of the opposition. In 1793 he played a significant role in his county’s refusal to pay war aid to Vienna. In response to Napoleon’s call to the Hungarian nation, he equipped 40 horsemen of his own expense.<sup>25</sup>

His motto, echoing his ancestors, was: “*nunquam retro!*” (never retreat!). It meant to live constantly on the alert to fight, never to compromise or surrender. Rather to die. This disposition urges him to seek deadly danger:

“What savage delight must have run along the nerves of (the elder) Wesselényi when he reached desperately wild places with his restless and artificially aroused horses, when he let his carriage move along unobstructed. He lashed the horses with his whip and galloped on like a whirlwind. When the danger increased, he threw away the reins. The wild foursome dashed like lightning towards the edge of the precipice or the deep bank of the Szamos. One more step, one more moment and all would end. God’s hand could help no longer. Then Wesselényi’s shrill voice penetrated the thumping of hoofs and screams of the guests. Upon the well-known sign the carriages stopped immediately, the horses with trembling knees with the effort. The foam kept pouring off them, the master got off with indifference and patted his steeds that neighed in a friendly tone as if agreeing with the performance of the savage trick . . . And the guest? The half-dead guest, while obliged to smile at the fine trick, firmly resolved inside that come what may, he would never partake of the host’s hospitality again.”<sup>26</sup>

Another time he burst out with blind wrath at his son’s alleged clumsiness or helplessness:

“Originality was Wesselényi’s main characteristic, so he celebrated spring in his own manner. ( . . . ) Amidst flourishes and cracks of whips the distinguished procession was passing the broad streets of Zsibó when some sleeping swine by the garden fences woke up with a peculiar grunt at the noise. This made his son’s fiery horse take an enormous side jump so that its rider fell head first into the hard lumps of earth and passed out. For a few seconds we thought he was dead: his father jumped off his horse and burst out into desperate lamentation, and in the violent embrace of his son’s apparent death the extraordinarily powerful man also collapsed. We poured cold water over the youth who came to in a few minutes. The voices of joy awakened the father, and his son jumped to his feet. The father’s anguish now turned into wrath, and the joy over his son’s recovery was overshadowed by the disgrace of his falling off the horse. He grabbed his son by the chest and threatened him with his fist for the shame. Only much begging and entreaty could pacify the father whom the injury cut to the quick.”<sup>27</sup> (Ujfalvy 1955: 47–48)

His son, *Baron Miklós Wesselényi Jr.* (1796–1850) is an important figure of the Hungarian imaginary national pantheon. History books depict him as the “masculine ideal” of the Members of the Parliament, the “champion of masculine beauty and courage.” He is the “boatman of the flood”, saving thousands of lives during the 1838 flood of Pest, thanks to his legendary bodily strength, and his self-sacrificing and heroic conduct. Most of his life was spent in Transylvania at his estate at Zsibó, from where he always arrived at the Transylvanian parliament in Kolozsvár with his “foaming team”. He began to participate in public

affairs in 1818, and from the 1830 diet he was one of the leaders of the opposition in the Upper House, a leading figure of the Transylvanian political movements and a devoted unionist. In 1835 he was sued for his provocative speech at the assembly of Szatmár county. In 1839 the royal court sentenced him to three years imprisonment but in 1840 he was granted amnesty.

The young Miklós was brought up according to his father's ideas based on the principle of "*nunquam retro*". The child, also of great bodily strength, was said to have shot a wolf at the age of seven and deer and boar at eight. And when, in 1805, clutching the handle of his sword, the father rushed to the lord lieutenant Tholdi's quarters, the young Miklós also defended his father by sword, legend says. Similarly to his father, he was also known nationwide for his bodily strength, temper, courage and relentless impatience. This patriarchal masculinity, resulting from the urge of the pre-modern *libido dominandi*, i.e. an instinctive desire after domination, a sort of sense of duty based on an inner drive that man "owes himself",<sup>28</sup> which structured the daily routine of the Wesselényi manor, was characterized by a sort of militant, tough, savage disposition close to nature, refusing compromise, retreat or pity (and self-pity). His urge "to stop a wounded wild boar started from its den dashing towards the hunter with a single hunter's knife" is almost promoted to the rank of a moral principle.

The middle-class youth was the opposite of the aristocratic offspring. In society he had no position of power as yet, and consequently it was in his interest to rearrange the power relations. At the same time, he already felt the opportunity of upward social mobility, and he subordinated almost everything to it, including his own body. His self-control and social accommodation formed the credit for his potential career, the guarantee for his future excellence. He tried to increase his long-term upward mobility opportunities by turning his accommodation into routine clad in the ethos of the emerging lower middle classes. As a result, he envisioned the bringing up of his offspring as disciplined members of a community trying to control the morality, intellect, attitudinal drives and abilities, as well as the physical properties postulated as main goals.

There was another—far from simply formal—difference between the physical education of the enlightened vanguard of the aristocracy and gymnastic exercises as pursued in Clair's institute, namely that the high-born families employed private tutors who cared for their young offspring individually. That signifies a decisive difference in the whole process of education: during socialization at home, the noble scion acquired the skills and knowledge not as a member of a community subordinated to the authority of the educator, but exclusively as the focus of his tutor's attention. Since home tuition was tailored to the pupil and the aristocratic family were in a position of power over the tutor, it helped maintain and reinforce the belief that the young magnate was an extraordinary, outstanding, unique being simply as a result of his social position. Thus, the improvement of a young man's physical abilities at home can be interpreted as the continuation of the family's past.

## Conclusion

Although Hungary was more archaic and "backward" in several respects in the first half of the 19th century than the majority of Western European soci-

eties, social changes moved in the same direction: towards modernization. True, for example, that around 1830, out of a total of over 30,000 inhabitants of Buda a mere 1000 were residents with all rights, the rest being poor craftsmen, artisans, servants, serfs, paupers. In addition, there was the vestige of feudal times—the outdated system of guilds curbing production. In the early 1840s only some 500 of the over 11,000 industrial firms of the Monarchy were in Hungarian territory and the Kingdom produced a mere 7% of the Monarchy's total industrial output. In this period, not even the town dwellers were involved exclusively in industry or trade: many also had land, gardens, vineyards. Barely one-third of town dwellers are presumed to have lived exclusively by industrial or commercial activity<sup>29</sup>.

Michael Grant's formulation, however, namely that European civilizations are interrelated and "no European can be a complete exile in any part of Europe,"<sup>30</sup> holds true as far as the Hungarian Kingdom is concerned in this period. Eric Hobsbawm might also be quoted in this context: "the educational highway seemed more attractive than the business highway. (. . .) In a sense education represented individualist competition, the 'career open to talent' and the triumph of merit over birth and connection quite as effectively as business, and this through the device of the competitive examination."<sup>31</sup> Needless to say: physical education based on an "optimistic view of men's perfectability"<sup>32</sup> together with the institutionalization of a rational and rationalized *body politics* was also part of this educational highway in different parts of Europe—including Hungary. The major question of the period was how the nation could supersede the limits of feudal nationalism. Similarly to England, Poland and Spain, the nobility was a social and political body of outstanding weight in Hungary. Paradoxically, this fact offered the advantage that there was no class schism between the various fractions—as against, for example, France where there were desperate political struggles between the middle classes and the aristocracy.<sup>33</sup> A division similar to England's Whig vs. Tory dualism did exist in the Reform Age but the basic principles of liberalism were more or less shared by the two main fractions. What fundamentally differentiated liberal nationalism, which by the mid-1840s "emerged in full force"<sup>34</sup> in Hungary, from feudal nationalism was that the liberal national movement elaborated an inclusive concept of nation that encouraged assimilation by voluntary choice. Citizens' rights were extended to those of non-noble birth. A good case in point is the *Pest National Fencing School*, established as a foundation in 1824 by liberal aristocrats in Pest who, "aiming to provide instruction to poor Hungarian youths in fencing," obliged themselves to pay 400 Florin to the foundation.<sup>35</sup>

Although delayed one or two decades, in the first part of the 19th century the changes that took place in Hungary were part of a long-term development characteristic of the entire Western and Central European region in the course of which the main institutions of a modern civilized society were crystallized. That *Honművész* could carry instalments about gymnastic exercises for many weeks was eventually possible because in the 1830s the tenets of the Enlightenment were already "in the air" in Hungary. And although the majority of the Hungarian nobility were hostile to the enlightened absolutistic Habsburg court, the messages of enlightenment drifting eastward from west of Vienna reached



more and more people. It is hard to overestimate the role of self-control and the ability of delaying gratification of the needs in this process.

"In the 1840s, associations for charitable purposes, social service, self-help, economic or cultural improvement proliferated and contributed to the disintegration of the barriers between estates. The combined membership of the approximately 600 associations in Hungary and Transylvania might have reached 100.000 by 1848. Some of the over two hundred casinos and reading societies, with tens of thousands of members, became thoroughly politicized."<sup>36</sup> Thanks to these social changes, both aristocrats and the members of the emerging middle classes could allow themselves to spend more and more time with contests, games and sporting activities. It should be emphasised that leisure time as such is also the product of this period since "pre-modern society had a different notion of work from a modern society. It had little sense of *specific leisure*; the notion of vacations and regular, off-the-job recreation was born into the nineteenth century".<sup>37</sup>

Baron Wesselényi junior was born in 1796 as a pre-modern man and died in 1850 as nearly a modern man. Imbued with the responsibility for the nation, he was one amongst those future-oriented, self-reflexive, rational and enlightened European men who, as champions of a new *Weltanschauung*, "believed firmly (and correctly) that human history was an ascent, rather than a decline or an undulating movement about a level trend." These men "believed that human society and individual man could be perfected by the same application of reason, and were destined to be so perfected by history."<sup>38</sup> That was the age when masculine energies were directed at the subjugation of the secularized Nature to human power. Teleological man, who did not only wish to anticipate the consequences of his deeds rationally but also wanted to take moral responsibility for them, evolved gradually.

True, the reproduction of noble perseverance and "manliness" served, first of all, the conservation of past greatness, the reinforcement of the social position of the select few. When Wesselényi senior educated his son to harden his body, his main aim was to preserve the patterns of noble pride, power, potential, and authority accumulated over the centuries. However, as we have seen, the senior baron had access to a variety of sources to gain knowledge in the spirit of the Enlightenment with special emphasis on physical education. There is no reason to doubt that the elder Wesselényi brought up his son at the turn of the century relying on the same principles of Locke, Rousseau and Hufeland as are referred to in Clair's statements in *Honművészt* a generation later. Neither is there any doubt, that both Clair and Wesselényi conceived of the body as a rational instrument which is part of an overwhelmingly rational world. It is easy to recognize the body-training principles of an enlightened rationalism in the elder Wesselényi's ambition to assign tasks of graded difficulty to his son in the following quotation: "from the time the child was able to bring an oak chair easily to the table, his father hammered a nail into the chair each day, and the young baron took it to the table with the same ease".<sup>39</sup>

In rowing, men of trained physiques, working like quasi automatons, repeating simple and monotonous movements, exerting somewhat mechanical efforts, disciplined and accommodating to their comrades, were in the boats and tried

to offset their social disadvantages as compared to the aristocrats by deliberately improving their physical strength and transforming their way of life, if need be. The young men attending gymnastic exercises had to submit to a form of socialization under institutional and organized circumstances which sooner or later enabled them to participate in social reproductive mechanisms aimed beyond their own life-time. When a child is trained to acquire behavioural forms that are expected of adults, the compulsion of obedience imposed upon him by his basic relation to the realm of grown-ups leaves him no freedom of choice to protest against the desires of the adults projected into him. In this way the future of the child, the potential he implies is rightly regarded as the prolongation of the socially conditioned career of his ancestors.

The sociological approach concentrating on the probable causal constituents of the life-path of different social groups<sup>40</sup> could throw into relief that gymnastic exercises as a set of activities were the product of spreading modernity and their long-term impact on the restructuring of social relations had far greater importance than any of the other pre-sports. While fox hunting, fencing and rowing are indicators of these social changes, gymnastics can be taken as the *generator* of these changes—on account of its intention to reorganize the entire way of life—because it incorporates the dispositional arsenal required for social mobility in the clearest embodied form. In this regard, then, the institutionalization of gymnastic exercises can be seen as part of the long-term changes in social dispositions and social structures in comparison to earlier forms of (aristocratic) living conditions. To put it differently, in the newly emerging sports masculine behavioural patterns are channelled into new directions; the urges to fight are gradually built upon by more rational dispositions conditioned by the civilizing process.

The radical innovation of gymnastic exercises is also manifest in converting the morally permeated collective ideal of nation into the ideologically permeated individual ideal of the body. The point of the long-term investment with gymnastic exercises going beyond one's own life-time is to improve the machinery of the main resource, the human body, to an optimal state of functioning. When for the middle-class citizen the health of his offspring becomes an aim in itself, a social group employs the ever more widely used techniques of self-control and obedience in the service of envisioned long-term social mobility. By incorporating and internalizing these rational and teleological elements, the bourgeois increases the steepness of his family's mobility curve, i.e. enhances the chances of progress in the social sphere. Hence, in Europe in the first part of the nineteenth century, gymnastic exercises can be considered as generators of revolutionary changes in the way of life: this umbrella sport is destined to create the corporeal foundation of modernity.

## Appendix

## Characteristics of gymnastic exercises and rowing

<b>Social-cultural background</b>	<b>Gymnastic Exercises</b>	<b>Rowing</b>
<i>Social basis of practitioners</i>	Aristocracy, later middle-classes	Aristocracy, then middle-classes
<i>Cultivation—promotion</i>	Directly involved in activity	Directly involved in activity, no others being used as tools
<i>Reference</i>	German, French	British
<i>Organizational form</i>	Private school, society	Rowing club, association
<i>Accessibility</i>	Open for the offspring of both aristocrats and middle-classes	At first aristocrats, middle-classes soon joining
<i>Sport socialization</i>	Learning it as teenagers	Learning it as grown-ups (strength required)
<i>Financing</i>	Donations by aristocrats and middle-classes	Donations by aristocrats, then by middle-classes
<i>Attitude to nation</i>	Latent anti-Habsburg orientation	At first important, decreasing later
<i>Political orientation</i>	Enlightened liberal tradition	Negligible
<i>Audience</i>	Negligible	At first many, later fewer on-lookers
<i>Collectiveness</i>	Collective organization, collective exercises	Individual and team competitions
<i>Beginning/end of activity</i>	From 1830s to this day	From the late 1830s to this day
<i>Spread, frequency</i>	Weekly, later daily	Annually, later more frequently
<i>Ideology, scientific references</i>	Moral philosophy, medicine, and pedagogy of the Enlightenment	Health-ideology, systematic training based on medical sciences
<i>Gender roles</i>	Both boys and girls	Only men
<i>Reproduction of competences</i>	Journals, educator as a master	English models, books, collective praxis
<i>Basic disposition</i>	Disciplined, obedient, goal- and future-oriented, looking for harmony	Competitive, disciplined, accommodating exertion of own energy, domesticated yearning for adventure
<i>Characteristics of manliness</i>	Collective spirit, obedience, aimed beyond their own life time, projecting into the children	Struggle, effort, aquatic adventure, discipline in nature
<i>Body politics</i>	Own body exposed to future-oriented efforts, regular training, body-as-machine, discovery of corporeality	Own body exposed to proportionate, even, slightly mechanical effort, need for training,

**Specificities of sport activity**

<i>Venue of cultivation</i>	Mainly in the open	In the open, on natural waters
<i>Sport field</i>	Low-level of standardization, public is not important	Slowly standardized course sizes, need of spectators disregarded
<i>Competition time</i>	Not fixed	Not fixed—dependent on season
<i>Need for instruments</i>	Moderate; main concern is the own body	Moderate: racing boat needed
<i>Means/function/aims</i>	Individual as part of the community	Let the best win under equal conditions
<i>Collectiveness / individuality</i>	Individual as part of the community	Individual and team contests
<i>Rules/measuring</i>	Learning, repetition, exercises	Gradually refined: racing categories, distances, boat types pointing to standardization, principle of fair play self-evident
<i>Supervisory body</i>	Educator's authority	Racing committee
<i>Degree of risk</i>	Low	Low
<i>Physical contact of competitors</i>	No direct contact, working side by side	No direct contact, starting side by side
<i>Professionalism/ amateurism</i>	Not to be taken into account	Club amateurs as individuals
<i>Qualities required</i>	Discipline, concentration, obedience, endurance, perseverance	Strength, endurance, perseverance, discipline, tolerance of monotony
<i>Betting</i>	No	Negligible
<i>Degree of violence</i>	Low, no direct fight	None, pure competition through identical tools
<i>Character of sport activity</i>	Obedient and disciplined individual as part of the community	Rivalry of individuals or teams with identical tools in nature, on water
<i>Direct aim of activity</i>	Overcoming own weaknesses, preserving health, strengthening the body	Overcoming the other, glory of victory
<i>Source of pleasure</i>	Training of will, successful exercises	Overcoming the other, glory of victory
<i>Weight of activity in way of life</i>	At first minimal, later growing importance	At first minimal, later competitor must train
<i>Physical/mental/moral character</i>	Physical qualities are important; moral of self-discipline, "sound mind in a sound body"	Physical qualities are important: strength, trained body; no special moral and/or aesthetic requirements
<i>Required costs</i>	Moderate	Moderate

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