

ETIQUETTE SCHOOL MANUALS IN PORTUGAL IN THE 19TH CENTURY

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The liberal political system that was introduced in Portugal between 1820 and 1834, brought to the educational field a set of new concerns and new ideas, based upon the legacy of the Lights and the French Revolution. Education was now looked upon, above all, as a right of the citizen that the State had to guarantee. Within this conformity, gratuity, obligation and freedom became strong topics of the liberal pedagogical discourse.

We must stress the importance and present pertinence of this new view of educational matters, without forgetting the difficulty in terms of actually implementing it, as well as the contradictions it contains. For instance, the call for the universalisation of education coexists in harmony with strong restrictions concerning citizenship rights that plague important strata of social life (illiterates, people with low incomes, etc.).

On the other hand, the generalisation of the school model and the consolidation of the public school system – two processes that were fostered by Portuguese liberalism – strengthened the school's role as a privileged space for the socialisation of children and young people and their integration into the values of the new society. At the primary level, the subjects chosen for this end are diverse. In some cases they aim to instruct the voting citizen, who is free and aware of the rights and duties which a liberal society requires in theory. In other cases their fundamental purpose was to conform to the moral and religious principles of Catholicism. In others still, they aimed at the

normalisation of behaviour according to the patterns considered to be socially legitimate.

In this article we shall concentrate on the last of the aforementioned references. Our main source will be the etiquette manuals published in Portugal between 1820 and 1910, when the moderate constitutional monarchy is deposed by a victorious republican revolution. Based on these manuals, we aim to reflect on the finalities, content and sense of the socialising component of the curriculum in the liberal education system, its continuity and changes, its convictions and paradoxes.

Our work hypothesis at this level is that, along with the Catholic religious and moral teachings, etiquette is one of the main tools for social and cultural integration of young Portuguese people. Despite its ambivalence, it represents the other side of the political and constitutional indoctrination that was disseminated in the initial phase of the period of liberal school socialisation.

1. Etiquette [*civilidade*] in the curriculum

Etiquette was included in the school curriculum, at the level of the first arts, within the context of the *pombalina* reforms which, at the end of the 18th century and still in an absolutist context, led to the creation of a public education system. The 1772 reform pointed, among other materials to be taught in the royal schools, to “the Catechism and the Rules of Etiquette in a brief compendium”¹.

The importance attributed to both areas, viewed as being intertwined, justified the publication of a considerable number of compendiums, many of which were catechisms aimed at supporting the teaching activities which, with respect to the 18th

century, were registered by Áurea Adão. This author observes that this fact does not mean that the rules of etiquette would be effectively received and assimilated by the students and applied to their daily lives².

The origins of etiquette date back to the 16th century, when Erasmus published his *De Civilitate Morum Pueriliam* (1530) – considered to be the first work of its kind – in which he adopts a didactic manner to present the ideal rules regarding man's behaviour in society, without reducing it to its exterior manifestations. The rules of etiquette were gradually integrated into the perspective of post-Tridentine Catholicism, at the same time as its use in schools became more common, associated in general with learning to read and write.

The target of a collective work, which incessantly rewrites it, etiquette gradually becomes a stereotyped set of requirements and prohibitions, reduced to their exterior dimension, already devoid of the moral basis which marked its humanist origins. It is in this state that the rules of etiquette reach the 19th century, as an “inherited tradition” that liberalism received from the old regime, as one of its most curious permanencies³.

The reforms in 1836 and 1844 include etiquette in the part of the curriculum that is devoted to the socialisation of future citizens, along with Moral and Christian Doctrine and, in the case of 1836, the Brief Notions of the Constitution. The 1870 reform – quickly suspended – no longer include it and the same happens with the reform in 1878 and those that follow it. However, in actual fact etiquette explicitly remains in the study plan until the end of the seventies.

Besides this fact, the profusion of etiquette compendiums, many of which were officially approved, well into the late 19th century – at a time when education was marked to a large extent by the manuals used – makes us raise the hypothesis that, at a daily school level and in association with the Catholic moral and religious catechisms,

these continued to be one of the main tools leading to the social and cultural integration of young Portuguese people in the emerging Nation-State.

One of the most used and successively republished works of the period, the *Manual Enciclopédico*, by E.A. Monteverde, who dedicated one chapter to etiquette, justifies the curricular importance of this area as follows: “So, can etiquette be learned through lessons? – Certainly... Therefore should it be taught in childhood? – As soon as the child’s reasoning ability begins to appear, it should be taught the precept and the example: it is necessary that the principles of etiquette develop together with the child’s faculties”⁴.

The second half of the 19th century was truly the “golden age” of etiquette manuals⁵. At the time, the role played by these forerunners of the present books of “etiquette and good manners” and, in particular, their common utilisation in schools, can today seem somewhat strange. It would be difficult for us to attribute educational legitimacy to such a subject.

However, and as various authors have pointed out, the school curriculum is “a social and historical artefact”⁶. The area of school programs is not an immutable and a-historic reality, it is a social and temporarily contextualised construction, which has known strong permanencies – of which the duration of the teaching of etiquette and the Catholic religion and morals are good examples – but also important moments of rupture, as happened in the transition from the 19th to the 20th century, with the substitution of etiquette for civics or, even more dramatically, at the beginning of the Republic, with the extinction of religious teaching and the secularization of morals.

If, in the cultural context of 19th century liberalism, the teaching of etiquette in schools had a legitimacy and a social functionality which justified its insertion in the curriculum – and an ample divulgence in the respective compendiums – the

transformations that occurred at the end of the century – secularism, patriotism... - would eventually question the prestige once attributed, leading to its substitution with curricular areas more adequate to the education of the citizen required by the new times and especially by the Republic.

2. The concept of etiquette

At the time, to what did the notion of etiquette correspond? Let us look at some of the definitions put forward in the respective compendiums: “Etiquette is the practice of the rules of decency; it is a collection of precepts, which tell us how we should behave towards other people, depending on their age, their social position and on the time and place we find ourselves”⁷; “[Etiquette is the] knowledge of practices which man should be familiar with in his dealings with the rest of the world. He should know how to regulate his actions and through them acquire in society the good opinion of the polished, delicate, urbane, courteous, etc.”⁸; “Etiquette is the set of conventional formulae used in society, for the purpose of giving mutual demonstrations of esteem, consideration and respect. In other words, it is the means of making ourselves more agreeable in our social interchanges”⁹.

In this way, etiquette emerges as a type of regulating code of social life. It is made up of a set of “conventional formulae”, a “collection of precepts”, which attempt to regulate the way people relate with each other, in particular in that which refers to the exterior aspect of these relations, for us to be “pleasant” to others and for them to form a “good opinion” of us. Etiquette attempts to prepare us to take our place in the social circles in which we move, so that our social behaviour will be adequate to the place, the

time and the social context, in such a way as to allow the accommodation of our conduct to the established social code.

Thus, etiquette is part of a constellation of ideas that intend to condense, at the time, the forms of social behaviour that are indispensable to a convenient social regulation and which include the notions of urbanity, courtesy, decency, politeness, delicacy, good manners, etc. referred to in the manuals. The term *Civilidade* – like *Urbanidad*, in the Spanish case – is that which is generalised as a visible expression of the previously mentioned “semantic field”¹⁰.

To be precise, it insists on the rules of behaviour at the table, in conversation, on excursions, on visits, in our dealings with others, in correspondence, clothing, and hygiene, among other social contexts privileged by the 19th century sociability.

3. “Civilising” vocation of etiquette

What aims are attributed to school etiquette by the liberal power/knowledge? In the first place, etiquette assumes a “civilising” vocation. As it says in one of the manuals: “... for example, eating, drinking, spitting, coughing, sneezing, etc. are naturally indispensable actions; but as these things are common to man and to beast, then by a natural principle, with the intention of corresponding to the dignity of his being, man should distinguish himself from the beast to elevate himself to his greatest perfection. Reason and praxis received require that these actions be performed with the best etiquette possible and in such a way as to differentiate him from beasts”¹¹.

Only thus can one achieve the quality of a “civilised” or “educated man”, in other words, he who has “vast knowledge of the way he should behave in society”¹².

Etiquette is, or should be, “in the direct reasoning of illustration”¹³. We can conclude the following: in a typically enlightened logic, it is clear that there was a will to integrate children who attended primary school, in their majority from popular backgrounds, in the “civilising process” guided by the political and intellectual liberal elite¹⁴.

What is intended is, at least potentially, the elevation of simple, unpolished, primitive people – as they were considered – to the category of polished, delicate and civilised¹⁵. An ideal citizen should be: capable of expressing himself correctly, of eating in a refined manner, of being agreeable in his social dealings, possess good work habits and personal hygiene, among other competencies. A true project of moralisation of customs and social regeneration is found underlying the use of etiquette in schools. As E. A. Monteverde says: “Etiquette makes us repress our defects. It is, in a way, a barrier which man puts between himself and others to avoid corruption”¹⁶.

Hence, school becomes the ideal place for the generalisation of the code of “good manners” typical of the privileged social strata, making it a valid code for all. Through the unification of conduct, we search for the uniformity of manners of saying and doing, contributing to the reinforcement of social cohesion, to the intensification of the sentiment of belonging to the same community. Underlying this proposal is a willingness, although relative, to democratise the rules of etiquette, until then limited to the aristocrats and to the rationality of a “court society”¹⁷.

4. “Normalising” vocation of etiquette

In second place, etiquette assumes a “normalising” vocation. Its aim is to shape the consciences and bodies of young generations in the light of the norms of social behaviour considered to be legitimate – and, as such, systemised in the respective manuals – contributing, in this way, to the development of a scheme of “habitus” common to all. This is the objective of a vast set of prescriptions and prohibitions which are presented here: “As far as possible, do not touch any part of your body which is not normally uncovered... Do not stretch... When you cough, make as little noise as possible: do not sigh in such a way that you will be heard... Avoid as far as possible burping in the presence of others... Do not make noise when you yawn, nor yawn while you are speaking... When you blow your nose, do not make the sound of a trumpet with your nose, nor look at what is in your handkerchief. Do not put your fingers in your nose, nor clean snots with your finger or sleeve but always with your handkerchief... Do not walk very quickly on the streets, as if you were running, nor wander aimlessly, nor with your mouth open, nor move your body like a lunatic. Do not walk on tiptoe, nor jump as if you were dancing and do not carry your head or your body at an angle, nor walk with your hands swinging”¹⁸.

What do these texts conclude? Basically, they intend to eradicate from the public arena all behaviour considered to be inconvenient, improper and indecent, leading to the learning of a complete repertoire of precepts about ways of life that are more adequate to the “civilisation of customs” which, as we have seen, is the desired outcome. Certain acts are hidden, performed in private, especially those that recall the animal that exists in every man, as is the case of physiological functions¹⁹.

Bodily expressions are strongly regulated, rationalised and submitted to the “technologies of the self” capable of impeding its spontaneous and disordered manifestations²⁰. There is an attempt to dominate the body and simultaneously control

the mind. The rules of etiquette want to impose a set of restrictions on the body and inculcate a complete range of proceedings tending to (emotional and physical) contention, to the “domestication” of impulses and passions, to the permanent vigilance of each person over his conduct²¹. Thus, etiquette represents an exercise of “disciplinary power” through which bodies and souls will be governed and normalised individuals will be produced.

Therefore, etiquette is part of a vaster project of “rationalisation” of daily lives and “social regulation”, assuming an enormous social functionality in this context.

5. Introduction of a “dynamic of distinction”

Etiquette also contains a “dynamic of distinction”, in apparent contradiction with the announced universal aspiration²². At the same time that it is integrated, it is differentiated. In accordance with one of the manuals: “Civilised man should know how to behave in society so that he can treat his peers well, depending on his position. For this reason, society is made up of individuals placed in different social positions”²³.

The preservation of social cohesion seems to require respect for the traditional hierarchy, notwithstanding the constitutional definition of the equality of all in the eyes of the law. The conventional formulae associated to etiquette – as regards conversation, methods of dealing with others, etc. – continue to presuppose, and contribute to reproduce, an unequally prestigious social system. We can see some examples from the *Manual Enciclopédico*: “What are these main feelings (of a well-formed heart)? – Respect for our superiors, benevolence towards our equals and indulgence towards our inferiors... Is the manner of greeting always the same? – No, there are diverse manners

and they even vary according to the person. The greeting should be respectful towards a superior, cordial and civil towards an equal, affable and benevolent towards an inferior... Whenever another person removes his hat to us, should we tell him to put it back on? No, this is only permitted from a superior to an inferior, or from equal to equal... Can you shake hands with everyone without distinction? – Only from superior to inferior or between equals. An inferior should never be the first to offer his hand to a superior”²⁴.

The forms of sociability which are accepted and encouraged thus seem to be traversed with socially discriminatory representations and practices which mark the rituals associated with greetings, manners of dealing, clothing, etc.²⁵. In short: everyone should know how to behave in his place.

6. The values of etiquette

Notions like order, hierarchy, respect and obedience are considered essential and as such are valorised by the etiquette manuals. The express objective of etiquette is to educate with a view to social conformity. It intends to produce citizens who respect order and the instituted authorities: “Be prompt in your obedience to the Sovereign and to the Authorities who represent him: respect the laws because the fortune of nations and the peace of families depend on this”²⁶.

The conformity of individuals to what is usually accepted and normally practised is also aspired. Behaviour should follow this rule: “It is necessary to take care that the practice established among us is civil and decorous and that all that is uncivil and indecorous be condemned”²⁷.

As regards clothing: “Finally, to be succinct, in matters of clothing, never go against popular opinion”²⁸. For this reason, the usual practice of moderation and the cultivation of the “middle ground” is recommended, at the various levels of social life. This virtue is most necessary at the table – this “anatomic theatre of good manners”²⁹. It is in this area that the manuals multiply in prescriptions and prohibitions with the objective of correct behaviour at meals, a privileged moment in the ritualisation of daily life: “Do not be gluttonous, nor eat greedily”, advises the *Compêndio de Civilidade e Urbanidade Cristã*³⁰.

The table is the ideal place for exercising an entire technology, whose mastery (or lack of it) will trace the frontier between the “civilised man” and the one who is not: “Food is taken to the mouth with the left hand, holding a fork, and is cut with the right hand, using a knife. We should take the utmost care not to use the knife to place any food in our mouths”³¹.

It is at meals that the exposure of our gestures forces us to be more self-disciplined, to have permanent control over our conduct. Thence, the greater rigour of the recommendations: “When you are at table, do not scratch yourself; and avoid as far as possible spitting, coughing and blowing your nose”³².

The concept of decency is also very central as are the things associated with it – modesty, decorum, propriety, etc.³³ – aiming at behaviour, in whatever the case, which conforms to the prevailing moral principles of the society of the time: “Decency requires that no one dress or undress in front of other people... Having said our prayers, we should lie down in such a way that we are covered and composed decently”³⁴; “Children of both sexes, but mostly girls, should understand that decency only exists when the body is clothed, from neck to ankle or at least from the chest to the knees”³⁵.

Any daring is, at this level, censured and disdained. In particular, nudity, the exposure of the body – a potential source of disorder and of corruption³⁶ – is severely repressed. The body should be rigorously hidden from sinful looks and thoughts.

7. Etiquette and Catholicism

One of the most conspicuous characteristics of the liberal socialisation promoted in primary schools throughout the 19th century and one of its most curious marks of continuity is the importance maintained by the teaching of Catholic religion and morals. This fact takes account of the limitations of the secularist process undertaken by liberalism, which felt there was no alternative for the consensual and integrating function which Catholicism, with its symbols and rituals, had been performing.

One aspect to be pointed out, which concerns us now, is the clear subordination of etiquette to the principles of the Catholic religion, with which it is sometimes associated. School etiquette is a Catholic etiquette; the religious reference is fundamental here³⁷. As J. F. Pereira states: “Knowledge of the precepts of etiquette is so vital that no one can ignore them without incurring general contempt: but what makes etiquette so valuable is its conformity to the spirit of Christianity”³⁸.

The majority of the compendiums usually dedicate a chapter to etiquette in church, with a set of indications on the behaviour to adopt during religious ceremonies. The identification of etiquette with the principles of Catholicism is a constant: “In effect, this (etiquette) is based on two Christian virtues: humbleness and charity”³⁹. Only more towards the end of the century did one or two writers make an effort to free etiquette from the religious framework, secularising it. The most remarkable case is that

of A. M. Baptista: “The etiquette compendiums expatiate on indications and precepts about the way we should behave in temples, but they subordinate the entire doctrine to the idea of Catholicism. Respecting and observing, as we should, the Catholic religion, desiring all possible veneration for its acts, for its ceremonies, for its cult, we feel this link, this dependence of etiquette on religion is very out of place when there is no doubt that both are completely distinct and independent. Etiquette is not the exclusive property of Catholics; every man, whatever his religion, has duties of etiquette to fulfil, as a result of the tolerance and the mutual respect concerning the beliefs of others”⁴⁰.

Although it was very significant, this would remain a minority position within the framework of monarchic liberalism. For the majority of authors Catholic religious education would remain as one of the most important elements of the curriculum, with its principles shaping all the other elements, namely etiquette. The intention was for the moral and spiritual element encouraged in primary schools to be the result of the coming together of liberal and Catholic presumptions.

8. Etiquette: constants and innovations

Upon analysing approximately one century of school production regarding etiquette, one of the aspects which attracts most attention is the long duration of its themes, formulae and language. There are obvious similarities between the compendiums at the beginning and the end of the period under study. This would allow for the successive reprints without alterations in the form or content. The case of the *Escola de Política...*, is paradigmatic. It was first published in the second half of the 18th century and lasted through the entire 19th century⁴¹.

However, this process also has a reverse side: the “archaism” of the etiquette models⁴². By the end of the 19th century, all of this “old material” had begun to show signs of exhaustion⁴³. Our already familiar A. M. Baptista showed himself to be most aware of the need of modernising etiquette: “Many booklets have been published on etiquette; but they all commit the sin of being too lengthy, occupying themselves with impertinent and frivolous details... Apart from this, many of these prescriptions, which are to be found in all or nearly all of the etiquette compendiums, are presently rejected in social dealings, because they are forced, tiring and cumbersome... We do not believe that good habits and social propriety will suffer from the exclusion of certain practices and formulae which do nothing to further the aim which etiquette has in mind – affability in social dealings”⁴⁴.

Basically, one of the most sensitive questions confronting 19th century etiquette is being asked here: to what extent does it still preserve a moral foundation? Or does it merely correspond to a cult of appearances? Even though it continues to spread Erasmus’ formula which stipulates that “the posture of the body is an indicator of the posture of the soul”⁴⁵, many of the precepts which fill pages of manuals seem to view external gestures as a dissimulation, even when well-intentioned, of intimate realities: “A man should present himself with a frank and open exterior, but with a prudent and reserved interior, which keeps him constantly on the defensive, while at the same time knowing how to dissimulate with a natural and apparent frankness”⁴⁶.

In this way, the rules of conduct prescribed by etiquette run the risk of being transformed into circumstantial, conventional and superficial polish, having little to do with the moral education which new ways of life and a new sociability had made necessary⁴⁷.

Even so, some innovation can be found in the texts of the end of the century. One of the most notable refers to the new conceptions related to bodily hygiene, which the etiquette manuals began to transmit: “Bodily cleanliness is indispensable to health... When you get up, you should have a bath... Before meals you should wash your hands and afterwards wash your hands and mouth... Your teeth should be cleaned in the morning and as many times as necessary during the day, especially after meals”⁴⁸; “But this cleanliness and decency should be perfect and complete and not just for the sake of appearance, like so many false virtues... It is also excellent that next you do some gymnastics, suited to the bedroom and, if time allows, that you take a long walk in healthy wooded areas. This is an excellent exercise, especially at daybreak⁴⁹.”

While the traditional etiquette manuals emphasised the advantages of cleanliness - especially in the sense of “pleasing our peers”⁵⁰ - the manuals of the later phase refer more to hygiene concerns, aiming at the health of the body, albeit associated with the health of the soul. The control of the body, to which we have already referred, also included the inculcation of an entire technology regarding bodily cleanliness and the vigilance, in a school context, of its observance⁵¹.

9. From etiquette to civic education

What conclusions can we draw at the end of this road? We believe that Nóvoa’s⁵² reflection on the influence of the French revolution’s ideological and pedagogical assumptions in Portugal may well apply to the analysis of the meaning of the etiquette school manuals. Liberal education comprises two apparently contradictory aims: a desire for liberation, for the emancipation of humankind, leading to the project

of creating free citizens who are capable of participating in public life; and a socialising and integrating vocation, that tends towards the creation of mechanisms of regulation, social and cultural control, and legitimisation of the new political order.

To some extent this ambivalence is present in the etiquette manuals. On the one hand they set out to free man from the constraints resulting from his bond to “animality”, bringing him from “barbarity” to “civilisation”, but on the other hand they do so by imposing a set of rules and forms of social life viewed as being legitimate, that is, through the “normalisation” of behaviour.

The complexity of senses referred above warns us about the need not to reduce liberal education to the epopoeia of a people guided by its faith in progress and in civilisation, nor to a mere resource for social reproduction. In this case, the pillars of regulation and emancipation are head and tail of the same coin, even when the finalities leading to social conformance seem to clearly prevail, as in the case of etiquette.

However, we must keep in mind that the discourse of etiquette is situated at the level of societal representations. Naturally, its full realisation in pedagogical practice and particularly in the educational and social reality raises many doubts. To what extent does the prescribed conduct coincide with, or differ from, real conduct? To what extent did (or didn't) primary school teachers promote the inculcation of the rules of etiquette in their schools? Did these influence pupils' daily behaviour?

In truth, etiquette manuals essentially give an account of a society that liberalism idealised, though such a society is not confirmed by some of the sources of this period. The ideal citizen should be able to exercise his civic rights and fulfil his duties – especially those regarding voting, tax payment and military service –, and at the same time be polished, affable, kind, honest, modest, moderate and respectful of the established norms of social order and hierarchy.

Only towards the end of the century did the growing consensus of the idea of a Nation-State and the gradual secularisation of Portuguese society lead to the process of autonomy of morality in relation to religion and to the emergence of a curricular area directed towards citizenship education.

Etiquette manuals would gradually disappear from the daily lives of schools, confronted with the generalisation of the first manuals of civic education, heirs to the tradition inaugurated decades before by the political and constitutional catechisms⁵³. Thus, etiquette and Catholicism lost the prestige that was previously acknowledged in them. According P. Ariès: “In short, replacing etiquette with civic education at school represents the passage from the traditional community to the modern State”⁵⁴.

With the Republic, established in 1910, the new concerns and the new vision of citizenship lead to the consecration of civic education as a fundamental curricular area, emerging as the lay alternative to the recently extinct Catholic moral and religion. It also forms the central component of the construction project of the “new man” and of the “regeneration” of Portuguese society⁵⁵.

Its ultimate aim is to allow citizens to adhere, with their intellect and affect simultaneously, to the values associated with republicanism. This task is clearly attributed to the school and is materialised in the formal curriculum, but especially – in a much richer and interesting way – in the more informal manifestations, such as cults, rituals and symbols of lay inspiration, although imbued with a certain religious connotation, that we might call civic religiosity. The cult of the nation, this profoundly unifying entity, is perhaps the best example of this. From the point of view of its legitimacy, in that ideological and cultural context little room is left for an area with objectives and characteristics such as those of etiquette.

ANotes@

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