

## Print, Fashion, and the Making of the Enlightenment Philosopher

Eskildsen, Kasper Risbjerg

*Published in:*  
Kongelige Danske Videnskabernes Selskab. Historisk-Filosofiske Meddelelser

*Publication date:*  
2008

*Document Version*  
Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

*Citation for published version (APA):*  
Eskildsen, K. R. (2008). Print, Fashion, and the Making of the Enlightenment Philosopher. *Kongelige Danske Videnskabernes Selskab. Historisk-Filosofiske Meddelelser*, (101), 126-144.

### General rights

Copyright and moral rights for the publications made accessible in the public portal are retained by the authors and/or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

- Users may download and print one copy of any publication from the public portal for the purpose of private study or research.
- You may not further distribute the material or use it for any profit-making activity or commercial gain.
- You may freely distribute the URL identifying the publication in the public portal.

### Take down policy

If you believe that this document breaches copyright please contact [rucforsk@kb.dk](mailto:rucforsk@kb.dk) providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.

DET KONGELIGE DANSKE VIDENSKABERNE SELSKAB  
udgiver følgende publikationsrækker:

THE ROYAL DANISH ACADEMY OF SCIENCES AND LETTERS  
issues the following series of publications:

	<i>Authorized Abbreviations</i>
<i>Historisk-filosofiske Meddelelser</i> , 8°	Hist. Fil. Medd. Dan. Vid. Selsk. (printed area 175 x 104 mm, 2700 units)
<i>Historisk-filosofiske Skrifter</i> , 4° (History, Philosophy, Philology, Archaeology, Art History)	Hist. Fil. Skr. Dan. Vid. Selsk. (printed area 2 columns, each 199 x 77 mm, 2100 units)
<i>Matematisk-fysiske Meddelelser</i> , 8° (Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry, Astronomy, Geology)	Mat. Fys. Medd. Dan. Vid. Selsk. (printed area 180 x 126 mm, 3360 units)
<i>Biologiske Skrifter</i> , 4° (Botany, Zoology, Palaeontology, General Biology)	Biol. Skr. Dan. Vid. Selsk. (printed area 2 columns, each 199 x 77 mm, 2100 units)
<i>Oversigt, Annual Report</i> , 8°	Overs. Dan. Vid. Selsk.

#### General guidelines

The Academy invites original papers that contribute significantly to research carried on in Denmark. Foreign contributions are accepted from temporary residents in Denmark, participants in a joint project involving Danish researchers, or those in discussion with Danish contributors.

#### Instructions to authors

Manuscripts from contributors who are not members of the Academy will be refereed by two members of the Academy. Authors of papers accepted for publication will receive galley proofs and page proofs; these should be returned promptly to the editor. Corrections other than of printer's errors will be charged to the author(s) insofar as the costs exceed 15% of the cost of typesetting.

Authors receive a total of 50 free copies. An order form, quoting a special price for additional copies, will accompany the page proofs. Authors are invited to provide addresses of up to 20 journals to which review copies could profitably be sent.

Manuscripts can be returned, but only upon request made before publication of the paper. Original photos and artwork are returned upon request.

# Northern Antiquities and National Identities. Perceptions of Denmark and the North In the Eighteenth Century

Symposium held in Copenhagen

August 2005

Edited by Knud Haakonssen & Henrik Horstbøll

Historisk-filosofiske Meddelelser 101

Det Kongelige Danske Videnskabernes Selskab  
The Royal Danish Academy of Sciences and Letters

2008

## 6. Print, Fashion, and the Making of the Enlightenment Philosopher

Kasper Risbjerg Eskildsen

### Print and Fashion

Since Gutenberg, printing has defined academic identities. Renaissance humanists constructed their European community of letters and minds – the *respublica litteraria* – upon the foundations of printed dictionaries and encyclopaedias, letter collections, and editions of obscure and forgotten works of antiquity.<sup>321</sup> Since the Renaissance, innovations in printing have repeatedly affected and transformed academic identities. In the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the introduction of charts and tables in Petrus Ramus' works changed how scholars across Europe viewed philosophy and accelerated the decline of the oral traditions of medieval universities.<sup>322</sup> Today, electronic publishing helps unravel the close bonds between nationstate and research university that during the early 19<sup>th</sup> century were forged in Germany.

But printing was never easily controlled. Lack of technical skills and practical obstacles have limited scholars' control over the presentation of their arguments. Changes in market interests, expectations of patrons, and reading practices have forced them to rethink the content of their work. While printing allowed for standardization and broader dissemination of scholarship, it also threatened the sanctity of the study and made scholars more vulnerable to social pressures.<sup>323</sup>

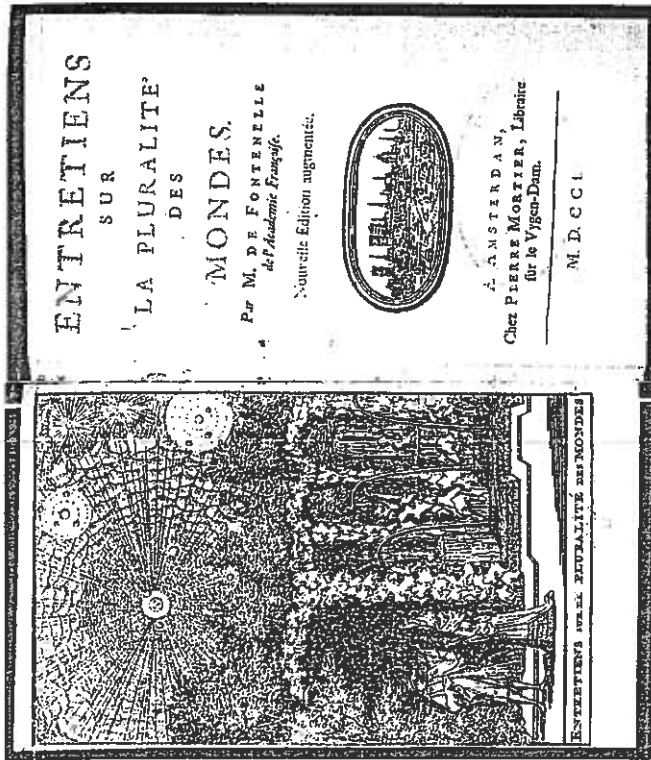
Early Enlightenment scholars experienced a number of such challenges. During the second half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the European publishing industry changed dramatically. A rapidly growing reading audience eagerly consumed daily newspapers, vernacular novels, and popular religious and philosophical pamphlets. Books were marketed not only to scholars, but also to women, servants, farmers, and merchants. The publishing industry created room, as many students of the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century have noticed, for a plurality of unruly voices. The religious underground spread its messages through leaflets and booklets. Political dissenters uncovered information and inspiration

in newspapers and periodicals. Hedonists and materialists could enjoy themselves with pornographic novels and radical philosophical treatises. These changes, as Martin Gierl, Jonathan Israel, and Martin Mulrow recently have documented, had a profound impact upon scholarly conventions and identities.<sup>324</sup>

Another innovation of the late 17<sup>th</sup> century, which was no less influential than these radical voices of the underground, was the fashion journal. New philosophical and literary journals, such as Pierre Bayle's *Nouvelles de la République des Lettres* (1684) and Otto Mencke's *Acta Eruditorum* (1682), were not only instruments of the Enlightenment mainstream, but also important disseminators of underground philosophies.<sup>325</sup> Outside the realm of learning, Donneau de Visé's *Le Mercure galant* had a similar impact – intellectual and otherwise. First published in 1672, the *Mercure* every month delivered insights into the life of Parisian salons and Louis XIV's court at Versailles. For decades, its detailed engravings and meticulous descriptions of the latest French styles dictated how men and women across Europe viewed and dressed themselves.<sup>326</sup>

Like the radical voices of the underground, the *Mercure* destabilized older cultural and intellectual hegemonies. As late as 1721, Montesquieu jokingly remarked, "A woman who leaves Paris to spend six months in the country comes back looking as antiquated as if she had been away for thirty years."<sup>327</sup> However, the *Mercure* and its many imitators, such as the Venetian *Pallade Veneta* (1687) or the British *Ladies' Mercury* (1693), allowed not only exiled Parisian ladies, but also foreigners to keep pace with the latest chic.<sup>328</sup> Already in 1690, the English *Fop-Dictionary* spoke of the "Foreign Tyranny" of French fashion.<sup>329</sup> In 1739, Johann Heinrich Zedler's *Universal-Lexicon* complained, "We Germans usually get our fashions, especially in clothing, from France, as the majority erroneously believes that the French are more skilled in inventing such things."<sup>330</sup> For all Europeans, as Abbé de Bellegarde explained in 1709, French fashion had become an inescapable reality:

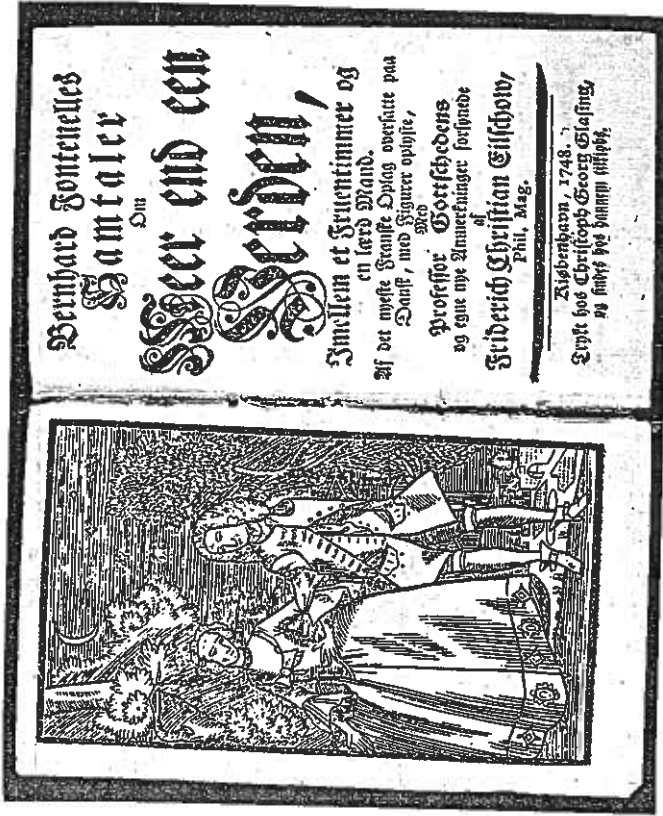
Fashion imposes a kind of necessity, to which the wisest must submit themselves when it has become well-established: singularity in the way one dresses, as in all other matters, is blameworthy. Why let oneself be seen in an outfit that always offends because it is unfashionable? ... In places where the fashion changes, one does not only dress for one's own convenience. One must either



Frontispiece to the 1701 edition of Fontenelle's *Entretiens sur la pluralité des mondes* first published in 1686. The philosopher has left the university and is instead teaching a polite and fashionable lady in a garden.

shun the affairs of the world or behave like gentlemen do, not to hurt the eyes of others with peculiar singularities.<sup>331</sup>

The emergence of fashion also affected academic identities. Among courtiers and *salonniers*, scholarly customs and clothing had been sources of constant ridicule and derision since the Renaissance. Most early modern scholars were equally dismissive of the superficialities of polite society.<sup>332</sup> However, at the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the changes in publishing motivated some scholars to write in a more witty and inviting manner. These popular authors, Mary Terrall argues, not only sought new readers and increasing sales, but also legitimacy within the social elites.<sup>333</sup> If they wanted to appeal to the elites, they needed to know the language and style of fashion journals and romance novels. "I've tried," Fontenelle explained in the preface to his bestseller *Entretiens sur la pluralité des mondes* of 1686, "to treat Philosophy in a very



Frontispiece to the Danish translation of Fontenelle's *Samlæser om meer end een Verden* by Frederik Christian Eilschow (Copenhagen 1748).

unphilosophical manner; I've attempted to bring it to the point where it's neither too dry for men and women of the world nor too playful for scholars."<sup>334</sup>

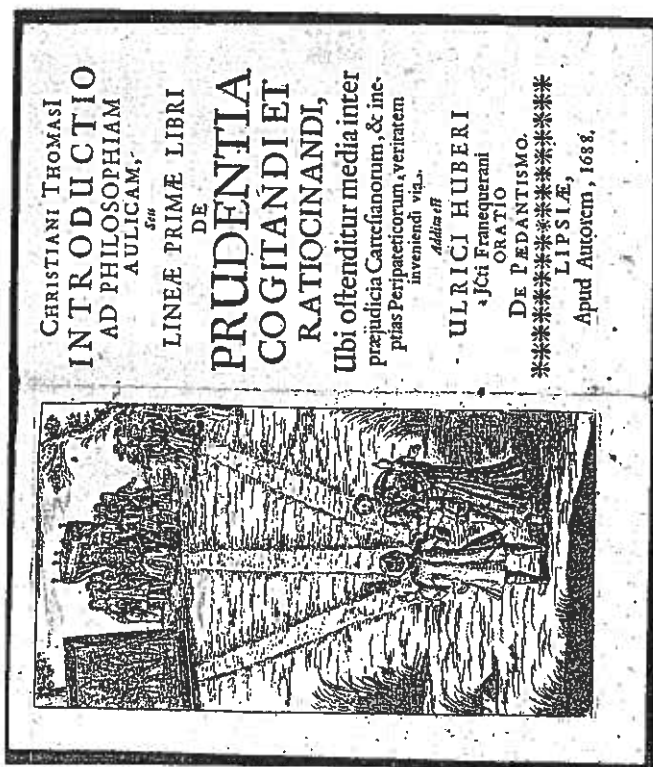
While individual figures, such as Fontenelle, could travel between the *respublica litteraria* and polite society, the majority of scholars were not granted the same access. In 1693 the first issue of the British *Ladies' Mercury* even requested that, "we may not be troubled with other Questions relating to Learning, Religion, etc."<sup>335</sup> The broader inclusion of scholars into polite society demanded reform of the institutions that defined and sustained academic identities. At the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, Europe's old universities were still the most important of these institutions.

### Christian Thomasius and the Philosophy of Fashion

The Saxon philosopher Christian Thomasius was one of the first European thinkers to analyse fashion within a university setting. In 1687, only fifteen years after the first issue of *Le Mercure galant* was published, Thomasius offered a course on “how to imitate the French” at the University of Leipzig.<sup>386</sup> French customs and manners, he declared in his lecture program, were no longer unknown in Germany. Previously few Germans had cared about France, but “today everything here must be French. French clothing, French food, French utensils, French manners, French sins, yes, even French diseases [i. e. syphilis] are everywhere in fashion.”<sup>387</sup> Only the professors had failed to recognize that Germany had changed.

Thomasius lectured in the latest fashion – high-heeled shoes, laces, full-bottomed wig, and a sword at his side – but his intention was not just to introduce his students to the seasonal demands of the *Mercure*. To Thomasius, adherence to fashion expressed a respect for social norms and conventions. For students to become active citizens in the contemporary world, they needed to understand the unwritten rules of politeness and the “*je ne sais quoi*” of taste. Although French clothing, romance novels, and fashion journals were readily available in Leipzig, no one taught students how to navigate through this sea of constant changes. What the student should learn to imitate was French “*honnête*, learning, *beauté d’esprit*, *un bon goût*, and *galanterie*.”<sup>388</sup> And, Thomasius claimed, “when one combines all these parts, finally emerges *un parfait homme sage*, or a perfectly wise man, whom one can employ in the world for intelligent and important matters.”<sup>389</sup>

In 1687, Thomasius could not yet deliver a philosophy of fashion that suited his student audience. The available literature was too trivial and intimate to be used as textbooks. Thomasius recommended the writings of the *salonniers*, and notorious libertine, Mademoiselle de Scudéry, and used Amelot de la Houssaye’s annotated French translation of Baltasar Gracián’s *Oráculo manual y arte de prudencia* (1647) as a textbook.<sup>390</sup> However, these writings were more useful for provocation than for education. To create a school philosophy of fashion, Thomasius needed to fit the personal and tacit knowledge of *salonniers* and courtiers into a standardised textbook format. In March of 1688, the Saxon theoretician of natural law Samuel Pufendorf, in a private let-



tership to Thomasius' 1688 *Introductio ad philosophiam aulicam*, or introduction to court-philosophy, based upon his Leipzig lectures. A student is given the choice between French superficiality, scholarly pedantry, and Thomasius' middle way.

ter to Thomasius, pointed to the didactic shortcomings of Thomasius' program:

Concerning the German program on Gracian, I wonder whether it wouldn't be possible, now that we have brought what we call *justum* to proper perfection, to articulate into a discipline also the moral precepts on how to be accepted in the world as a prudent, cautious and polite man; and whether certain principles couldn't be found from which everything could be deduced, and certain divisions into which everything could be arranged – in other words, to get the whole business into one perspective. For this Gracian, for example, has many wonderful ideas, but much is hard to understand if you are not a man of the world or the court. Some of it is far too Spanish and abstract and cannot be

applied in practice, or it is only for the few and the special, but in the world in general it doesn't stand up. If, however, one had such a science, everything could be put in its place and ... the materials could soon be gathered from of the ancients as well as moderns, especially the French.<sup>341</sup>

In the following decades, Thomasius worked to place the teaching of manners, *decorum*, as a formal discipline within the standard curriculum of practical philosophy, next to natural law, *justum*, and moral philosophy, *honestum*.<sup>342</sup> Whereas natural law determined the universal rules of society and moral philosophy determined the universal rules of ethics, *decorum* should teach students how to negotiate the world of differences. It served students, Thomasius proclaimed in 1689, who "in the future want to apply their philosophy for the real use of humankind," rather than learn "pure unmingled philosophy."<sup>343</sup>

As Thomasius formulated the instructions on manners into an academic discipline, he also demarcated his new discipline from the polite literature and fashion journals. *Decorum* was not only of interest to ambitious students, but also to the rest of society. "Man's work needs a norm," Thomasius argued, "[i]f each acted after his own inclination, which conflicts in endless ways with those of others, the greatest harms and disadvantages would emerge among men, and surely a war of all against all would soon break out."<sup>344</sup> "Decorum," Thomasius declared to his students in Halle in 1701, "is the soul of human societies."<sup>345</sup>

Thomasius never published much about *decorum*. For those who did not attend his lectures in Leipzig and Halle, the only inklings were in lecture programs and scattered textbook comments. When Thomasius' thoughts spread to other universities, it was through his students rather than his writings. Even at the turn of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, academic defenders of *decorum* had problems finding academic works and textbooks on the topic. A few short chapters were scattered in Latin moral philosophy books of the time, but nothing more extensive was available in writing.<sup>346</sup> As late as 1713, the German translator of Gracian, Caspar Gotschling complained that *decorum* "until now has been found more in praxis than in theory, although I consider it as the foundation of many sciences [*Wissenschaften*] useful to human life."<sup>347</sup>

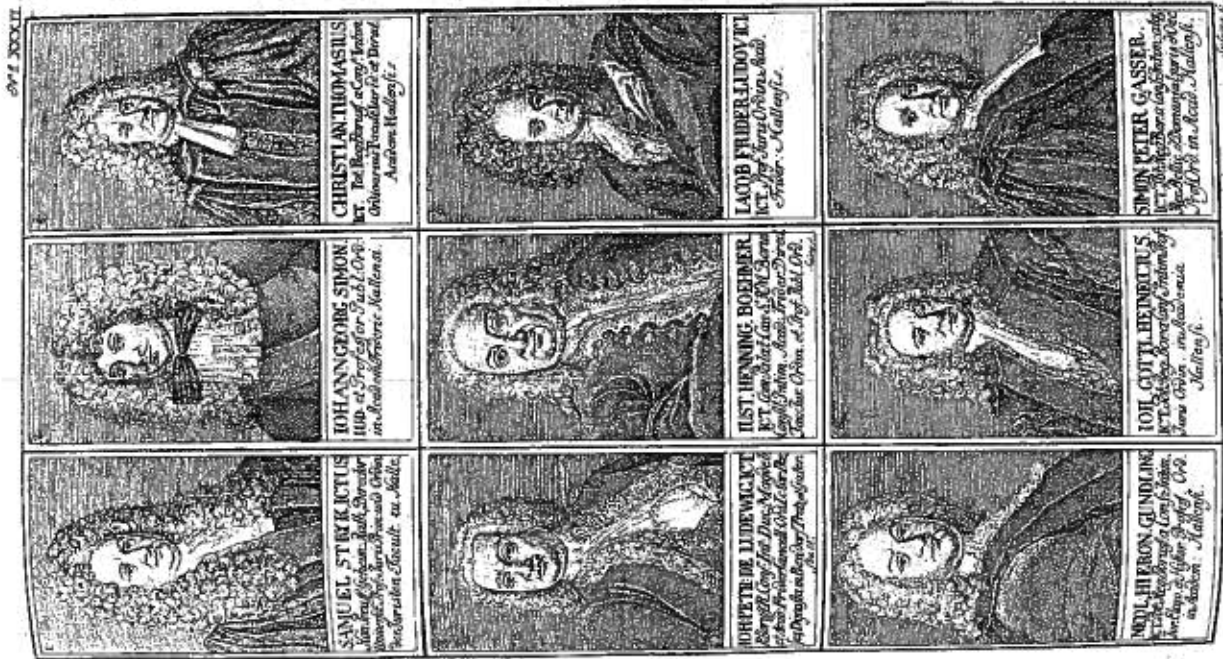
### Christoph Heinrich Amthor and the Anthropology of Fashion

The Danish Empire offers an interesting example of the dissemination of Thomasius' philosophy of fashion. French fashion was as influential in the Danish kings' dominions as elsewhere in Europe. Visiting Copenhagen in 1702, the diplomat Lacombe de Vigny reported how the French ambassador, Comte de Chamilly, had smuggled in "numerous boxes" stuffed with clothing "*à la mode de France*" and transformed several rooms of his residence into "*boutiques*" where "the Danish ladies could buy fans, masks, headresses, ribbons and more, and thereby did great harm to the merchants of Copenhagen."<sup>348</sup>

About the same time as Chamilly smuggled fashionable accessories into Copenhagen, the Kiel professor and later court historiographer, Christoph Heinrich Amthor, introduced Thomasius' educational program into the Danish Empire. Amthor addressed fashion and *decorum* in several of his works, first in his *Einleitung zur Staats und Sitten-Kunst* of 1706 and most thoroughly in *Collegium homileticum de jure decori*, published posthumously in Leipzig and Copenhagen in 1730. None of Thomasius' students, and not even Thomasius himself, wrote as much about *decorum* as Amthor.

Amthor's books were clearly products of Thomasius' school. They were written for students who wished to become "men of the world," and focused upon matters, "which are useful in daily life and can be applied in modern states."<sup>349</sup> Like Thomasius, Amthor insisted that "*usus severi* or in French *la mode*" was "the only principle for understanding *decorum*"<sup>350</sup> and blamed previous generations of scholars for their unfashionable behaviour. Polite and polished philosophers, Amthor explained in 1708, had now proven that these bad habits were inappropriate and unwarranted:

Whereas before scholars had to make do with black fur, round hat, and bad hair (possibly because under papal law, they were members of the clergy and, therefore, wanted to imitate the prophets and evangelists, who never are painted without hat or full-bottom-wig), today anyone is free to dress as he wants ... Until a few years ago, scholars inevitably appeared in Church or on the lectern, just like the farmer-sexton at prayer, dressed in their



robes, but now they wear a sword and understand that neither the devotion in prayer nor the skill of lecturing and disputing are derived from the hidden qualities of the robe.<sup>351</sup>

Amthor did not blindly follow his teacher in Halle. His most significant reinterpretation was probably his combination of decorum and anthropology. Amthor defined decorum as the “study [*Wissenschaft*] of how not to give reason for irritation or ridicule, also how not to do so because of insignificant indifferent manners.”<sup>352</sup> Since decorum only dealt with appearances and the reactions of others, it depended upon context. For example, nudity was not forbidden by any moral, natural, or divine law, as illustrated by the fact that Adam and Eve were naked in the Garden of Eden. In Africa and America, Amthor claimed, nudity was still perfectly acceptable. Only bad weather had accustomed Europeans to wear clothing and, thus, made nudity a violation of decorum.

Fashion not only differed between continents, but also between European countries. These differences were not accidental, but the results of local traditions and temperaments. “Every nation [*Völk*],” Amthor explained, “must arrange its decorum according to such reasonable habits as have been introduced into its country, and especially according to its natural temperament.”<sup>353</sup> Thus, German or Danish students should not slavishly follow the instructions in *Le Mercure galant*. Amthor repeatedly condemned the blind “imitation of French decorum” and the “distasteful habit of many, especially travellers, to force themselves to follow the decorum of a foreign nation, against their own nature and against the habits of the country where they were born.”<sup>354</sup>

Without *Le Mercure galant*, Amthor had problems defining the standards of decorum. In 1690, one French dictionary simply defined *la mode* as “the manner of dressing that follows the received usage at court.”<sup>355</sup> In 1706, Amthor came close to a similar definition, when he called the courts “the most perfect schools of the decorum cus-

Left: Engraving of professors at Thomasius' reform university in Halle, found in 1694, from Johann Christoph von Dreyhaupt *Pagus neletici et nudizici, oder Ausfühliche diplomatisch-historische Beschreibung...Saal-Creßjes* (Halle 1755), II: 756. The professors are all dressed according to latest fashion, but also indicate their professional status by wearing black robes.

tomary in each country."<sup>356</sup> But Amthor's anthropological emphasis upon local customs and natural temperaments often clashed with this purely power-based definition of decorum. In conglomerate states, such as the Danish Empire, loyalty towards the court and loyalty towards the natural, cultural, or linguistic community were not easily combined.

During the Great Nordic War, which devastated the shores of the Baltic Sea between 1710 and 1720, Amthor defended the Danish crown's interests against the local Gottorp nobility, for which King Frederic IV in 1713 awarded him the title of Historiographer Royal. But when writing about customs, Amthor vocally defended his German heritage. These internal tensions became especially apparent when Amthor wrote about languages. Balancing between loyalty to the court and devotion to the German language (while imitating the bad French of German courtiers), he admonished his students in Kiel:

Through the *haselieren* [i. e. "behaving like a hare," meaning caught by fashion frenzy], German tongues are filled with French *eloquence*, so that they no longer speak but *parlieren*, and their *discourse* is filled with beautiful *pensées* and *beaux mots*, just like the hare knows how to *lardieren* with his *Speck*. However, although it would be better if we used our rich and wonderful native tongue, this habit ... must nevertheless be expelled from the register of indecorous manners. For the ways of today demand it and especially a diligent man of the world living at court is better off by following suit than by insisting upon a forced purity of the German language.<sup>357</sup>

Amthor's inconsistency also manifested itself in his theoretical justifications for decorum. In part decorum was a matter of self-love. Anyone who wished a career at court needed to adjust to its ways and disguise his personal background and upbringing. In making this argument, Amthor resembled Renaissance and Baroque books of manners. Thomasius' chosen textbook by Baltasar Gracián, for example, recommended students to suppress or hide their national origins. However, Amthor went further than just justifying decorum with self-love. Probably inspired by Pufendorf and Thomasius, he added love towards all people in one's society.

Pufendorf, and with him Thomasius, had argued that people established states because of their natural inclination towards social life. Thus, they not only had duties towards themselves and their rulers, but also towards their fellow citizens. "Towards *one another*," Pufendorf wrote in 1673, "their Behaviour ought to be friendly and peaceable, as serviceable, and as affable as they can make it; not to give Occasion of Trouble by Moroseness and Obstunacy, nor envying the Happiness of any, or interrupting their lawful and honest Injoyments."<sup>358</sup> However, in Pufendorf's argument, nationality had little or no significance. Only Amthor's preoccupation with decorum made nationality important.

According to Amthor, decorum reflected the power structures of society. When the centre of power was not firmly established, the rules of decorum needed to be clearer and more firmly enforced. The court exhibited and exercised political dominance, when dictating how the citizens should dress and behave. A similar power relationship, Amthor claimed, existed between nations. A nation, which blindly accepted the customs and habits of another nation, also accepted the dominance of that nation. For these reasons, Amthor finally rejected his Francophile teacher in Halle:

I cannot deny that Mister Thomasius defends the French too much. He often ignores the fact that the French temperament is very different from the German and that, accordingly, only few of our compatriots completely can imitate the French. French decorum is in itself pleasant and good, but it cannot possibly serve as the yardstick of all nations [*Völker*]. Additionally, one should consider the fact that a nation, which imitates another nation too much, diminishes itself and can harm itself, if not directly then indirectly ... Yes indeed, the imitation of foreign manners is often an overlooked step towards slavery, through which a nation can loose its freedom. He who has already been mentally dominated so that he considers me better than himself, he will not resist me with sufficient force when I gain authority over him in any other field. And, first of all, when once he is under domination, he will accept it patiently since he already loved the conqueror before.<sup>359</sup>

Amthor at no point in his writings confronted German and Danish customs and manners. The threat to his German identity did not



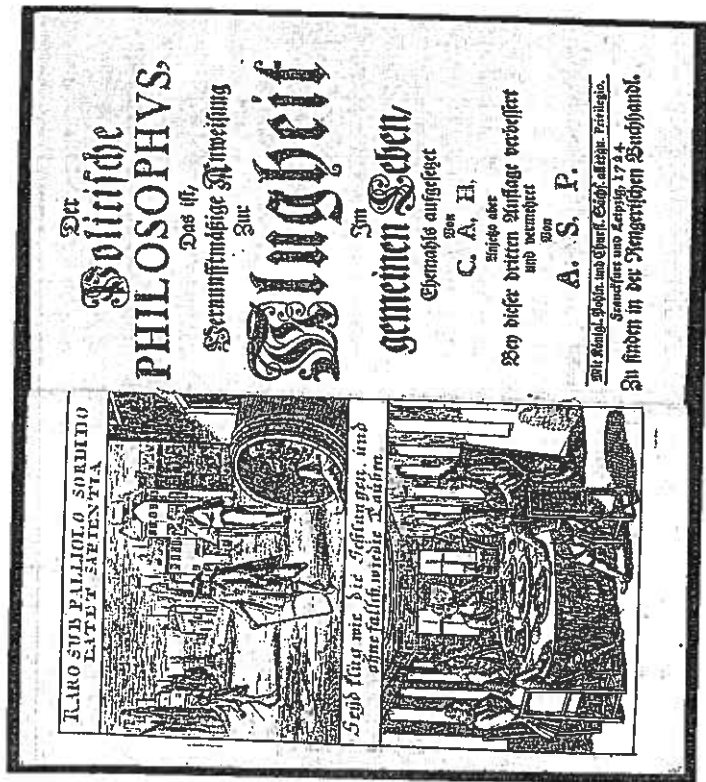
come from the Danish-speaking majority in the north, but from a few French-speaking trendsetters in Copenhagen. In 1728, another German subject of the Danish crown, Frederich Gerhard Voss, published a Danish rendition of Amthor's *Collegium*. Voss here simply replaced the word "German" with "Danish" or "Danish-German." To Voss, and most likely also to Amthor, Germans and Danes were one people, they had the same temperaments and customs, and belonged to the same nation. Even language differences were insignificant. Amthor's reference to German as "our so rich and wonderful native tongue [*Mutter-Sprache*]," Voss replaced with the neutral phrase "one's untainted native tongue [*Moders Maaal*]." <sup>360</sup>

### The Making of the Enlightenment Philosopher

Thomasius and Amthor's approach to fashion differed from that of French philosophers, such as Bellegarde and Fontenelle. Thomasius wrote many of his books in German and often claimed that these were intended not only for fellow academics, but also for men and women of the world. In 1691, for example, he dedicated his *Einleitung zu der Vernunft-Lehre* to the mayor of Leipzig and claimed to write for "all reasonable human beings" independent of social standing and gender.<sup>361</sup> However, only his shortlived literary journal *Monatsgespräche*, published from 1688 to 1690, resembled the witty and entertaining articles of *Le Mercure galant*. His other books were written in an academic style and often in the format of textbooks. Amthor also employed this style in his works, which, despite his witty commentary, were loaded with philosophical distinctions and technical vocabulary.

Like Fontenelle and Bellegarde, Thomasius and Amthor sought legitimation among social elites, but they acquired this legitimation within the universities. Instead of adjusting their individual writings to the style of fashion journals, they influenced their students and, through these, challenged the cultural divide between academy and polite society. Writing primarily for students and peers, they could determine the rules of discussion. This mixed style enabled them to resume control over the student body and the discussions in and around the universities.<sup>362</sup>

The academic control over fashion was never complete. Amthor's works, for example, did not receive the same attention as popular



Frontispiece to the 1724 edition of Christoph August Heumann's *Der Politische Philosophus*. Above, different kinds of impolite scholars are depicted and the Latin text declares: "Wisdom seldom hides under a dirty robe."

Below, the polite philosopher dines in worldly company and the German text declares: "Be clever as the snakes and without falsity as the doves."

works on fashion and etiquette, such as Hans Jørgensen Hørning's *Liden Moralsk og Politisk Bibel* (Small Moral and Political Bible, 1702), which was republished in several editions until 1759, translated into Icelandic in 1777, and recommended by the journal *Iris og Hebe* as late as 1796.<sup>363</sup> Complaints about unfashionable and otherworldly academics remained constant throughout the 18<sup>th</sup> century, as Alexander Kosenina has documented.<sup>364</sup> But Thomasius and Amthor offered a model for how academics could confront the new reality of fashion and fashion journals without endangering their academic identities. They helped transform the early modern scholar into an Enlightenment philosopher.

Among Thomasius and Amthor's successors, none described this transformation as pointedly and successfully as the Norwegian-born historian and playwright Ludvig Holberg. When writing about fashion, Holberg was redolent of Amthor. Holberg, for example, repeatedly complained about the money that students wasted upon the *grand tour* to Paris and insisted that French fashions offended the "natural taste" of Nordic people. In 1723, he published an entire comedy, *Jean de France eller Hans Frandsen*, ridiculing the imitation of French manners and fashions.

Other plays by Holberg examined the effect of decorum upon academic identities. The most popular of these plays was probably his *Erasmus Montanus eller Rasmus Berg*, about a bachelor of philosophy returning from university to his home village in the countryside. After its first publication in Copenhagen in 1731, the play was republished in Danish in 1742, 1758, and 1788, in German in 1744, 1748, 1752, 1761, 1771 and 1778, in Dutch in 1766 and 1799, and in Swedish in 1756, 1778 and 1781.<sup>365</sup> However, Holberg most pointedly described the transformative power of decorum in his late comedy, *Philosophus udi egen Indbilding* (The Self-Imagined Philosopher, 1753). The play ended as the philosopher Cosmologoreus and his famulus gave up their Latin names and academic clothing, leaving "two philosophers transformed into human beings."<sup>366</sup> Undergoing the transformation of a generation in an afternoon, Cosmologoreus, turned Cosmus Holgersen, explained:

I now believe that the mark of the philosopher is not to live in contest with others but to live better than others. Accordingly I will no more set myself apart from simple citizens, whether in my way of life or in my mode of dress.

See, there is my philosopher's robe trodden under foot.<sup>367</sup>

### Conclusions: Fashion and the Social Order

Since the 17<sup>th</sup> century, fashion has been a metaphor for the contingencies and uncertainties of the modern world. Sudden changes in tastes and habits have not only influenced choices of clothing, shoes, and handbags, but also unsettled profound beliefs and convictions. In the popular and, maybe especially, the academic imagination fashion has signalled the preference of novelty for novelty's sake, without consid-

eration for eternal values and solid truths. Already during the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, such comparisons were not unusual. In 1720, the Lund professor Andreas Rydelius complained that people "always search for and expect something new" and that they therefore "now treat our most honest moral principles the same way as the most uncertain hypotheses, yes, even like styles in clothing."<sup>368</sup> Nearly a century later, in 1803, the literary critic August Wilhelm Schlegel claimed that fashion and literature had become indistinguishable. Fashion surfaced not only in journals such as *Le Mercure galant*, but had contaminated also all other products of the printing press. The popular authors of his time, Schlegel argued, were "creatures of fashion" [*Geschöpfe der Mode*] and the book-market imitated the seasonal fluctuations of the fashion industry:

Twice every year, the great book-fair-flood (not including the smaller monthly floods that wash up the journals) throws large bales on land from the great ocean of authorial shallowness and platitude. Great hordes of readers then devour these with a sickening and ravenous appetite, but this doesn't provide them with any nutrition. Immediately forgotten again, [the bales] disappear into the dirt of the reading libraries, and the same cycle begins again with the next fair. One praises the now general taste for reading, but God help us! what kind of reading is this! It damns itself simply by its restless striving for novelty – in which there really is nothing new.<sup>369</sup>

Despite the multitude of such complaints, to the polite world of the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries fashion was as much a reaction against the uncertainties of the modern world as a cause of these uncertainties. The *Mercure* clearly created hunger for novelty, also within literature, but the journal would not have been possible without the preceding changes in reading and printing practices. Fashion, Elena Esposito argues, may even have limited the corrosive effects of the printing press.<sup>370</sup> While rejecting continuities across time, fashion created new continuities within a period. *Salonniers* and courtiers, who no longer could identify with past traditions, instead identified with their equals in Paris, London, and Berlin. Polite literature demanded submission to fashion, and its superficiality and meaninglessness rendered such submission non-threatening to Enlightenment ideals. Unlike the foregoing orders of clothing and taste, which were legitimized through disputable uni-

versal ideals, fashion needed no other legitimacy than its novelty. Fashion, Immanuel Kant explained in 1798, demanded no consideration of utility and had "no intentional inner value." It reflected no true taste and was often "hideous." However, fashion was a social demand and, Kant claimed, "It is always better to be a fool of fashion than an unfashionable fool."<sup>371</sup> In a world of contingencies and uncertainties, fashion delivered a common and neutral reference point.

During the 1680s, Christian Thomasius realized the stabilizing potential of fashion. Thomasius' new ideal of the polite and polished philosopher was partly an adaptation of the French ideal of the *honnête homme*, but he embedded this ideal within the theoretical framework of natural law, as formulated by Samuel Pufendorf. Thomasius' philosopher was not primarily serving the placeless *grand monde* of taste, but the social contract, his sovereign, and his fellow citizens. Fashion should create social order within borders rather than connections across borders. Among Thomasius' students, this localization of fashion resulted in a change of emphasis, away from Parisian costumes and towards local customs. In 1739, the article on "Mode" in Johann Heinrich Zedler's *Universal Lexicon* carefully distinguished between the rapidly changing trans-national fashions and local customs. Zedler compared the former to a "contagious disease"<sup>372</sup> which in short time could infect an entire country and underscored the political significance of customs.

Within the Danish Empire, the introduction of Thomasius' new discipline of decorum immediately resulted in discussions about natural temperaments and local customs. Unlike Saxony and Brandenburg-Prussia, where Thomasius and most of his students lived and taught, the Danish Empire consisted of a multitude of cultural and linguistic communities. The Empire stretched from Greenland, Iceland, and the Faeroe Islands in the North Atlantic to trading colonies in Africa, India, and the Caribbean. In the streets of Copenhagen, German was spoken almost as frequently as Danish. This plurality of cultures probably sensitized philosophers to differences in customs and habits.

However, the new emphasis upon temperaments and customs did not immediately cause rifts between the subjects of the conglomerate state. The two most important contributors to the Danish discussion about decorum, Christoph Heinrich Amthor and Ludvig Holberg, did not originate from the Danish-speaking majority. Amthor grew up in

Rendsburg in the Duchy of Holstein. Holberg was born and raised in Norway. Both Amthor and Holberg considered decorum as an instrument for creating order and coherence within the Danish king's dominions. The unnatural "Other," in opposition to which they defined their Danish "Self," was safely distant in Paris.

While decorum did not separate Danes, Germans, and Norwegians, it did undermine the *respublica litteraria* of Renaissance humanists.<sup>373</sup> Since Erasmus of Rotterdam, this community of letters and minds had not only united scholars across Europe, but also demarcated them from their compatriots. In one of the most important and influential early modern books on academic virtues, *De constantia* of 1584, the Dutch humanist Justus Lipsius explained:

The whole world is our country, wheresoeuer is the race of mankind sprong of that celestial seed. *Socrates* being asked of what country he was, answered: *Of the world*. For a high and loftie mind will not suffer it selfe to be penned by *OPINION* within such narrow bounds but conceiueh and knoweth the whole worlde to bee his owne. We scorne and laugh at fooles ... who with the weakelinke of *Opinion* are wedded to one corner of the world.<sup>374</sup>

Thomasius' new discipline of decorum demanded that scholars not only respected local opinions, but also adjusted themselves to these opinions. Much like the Renaissance humanist, Thomasius' idealized philosopher was supposed to think independently and freely, but his freedom was no longer justified with reference to a universal community of letters and minds. His *libertas philosophandi* was not an eternal privilege, but a temporal duty towards his sovereign and his fellow citizens.

At the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, another German subject of the Danish crown, Friedrich Gottlieb Klopstock, celebrated this change of loyalties. In his fragmentary and quasi-historical novel *Die deutsche Celebritätenrepublik* (The German Republic of Letters, 1774), Klopstock described the gradual emancipation of German academics from the European *respublica litteraria*. However, at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, national emancipation was no longer without cost for the unity and coherence of conglomerate states such as the Danish Empire. While researching his novel, Klopstock in 1770 moved from Copenhagen to Hamburg.

just south of the Danish border, and he never returned to the country that paid his wages. The philosophy of fashion, providing order in a world of change, was transforming into the ideology of nationalism, unsettling the order of *ancien régime* Europe.