

Culture and Clothing

Recently I was best man in a close friend's wedding. I was better dressed than I was in my own wedding nineteen years ago. Cuff links... I haven't worn cuff links since I was a small child. At that age I wore a three piece suit to church every Sunday. cuff links, tie pin, vest, shiny shoes. I hated it at that age. I think a lot of people did. That was the sixties and by the time we reached the mid seventies people were wearing jeans to church - and they still do. The seventies brought about a casual attitude that was reflected in our styles. It was a response to the stiff and up-tight fifties and before. Sort of the "cause and effect"....effect.

At the wedding ceremony, we were all dressed in our best and seemingly at our finest. We listened to classical music being played by talented young musicians, and everyone was so pleasant and amiable. Not to say that we behave so horribly on a typical day, but it felt different. I felt different. And all I had done was put on a tuxedo.

I remember something I had learned about meditation: that just as being excited or fearful causes one's breathing to excel, also slowing the breath causes one to become calm. One controls or at least influences the other. Maybe fashion works the same way. What if our whole culture adapted a more sophisticated form of dress and our collective frame of mind changed accordingly? Suppose we didn't look like convicts and all of our arts improved?

Imagine Americans pursuing higher interests than making money or beating the next level of the latest killing game. Maybe the decline in our dress code is not responsible for all of America's problems, after all I enjoy dressing down most of the time, but I do think this is the cart following the horse. One follows the other.

