Health and Hazard

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Spa Culture and the Social History of Medicine in the Nineteenth Century

By

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Warm waters bubbling forth from the earth, glamorous evening gowns and formal wear, orchestras and artists, casinos and promenades in the summer air –all these are images of the spa, that playground for fashionable nineteenth-century society. To this day, the thought of European health spas evokes something aristocratic, something sophisticated. However, these splendid places deserve more than nostalgia for a world past. They are worthy of serious historical study as important institutions that can tell us much of interest about European society in the past three centuries.

In its heyday in the nineteenth century, taking the waters was a popular and significant endeavor, showcasing much of what society had to offer. It was the place where social norms were set and broken, and rules of behavior were observed, enforced, and thwarted. Here rich and poor, aristocrats and commoners, maids and porters, bankers and bakers, lords, ladies, and ladies of the evening all had their prescribed roles in the drama set on the stage of the spa. In short, the spa represents a microcosm of the greater society that spawned it, although a unique one with its own peculiar culture.

This small world came to be dominated by the middle classes. In the eighteenth and early nineteenth century, royal courts made their summer residences at the spa, and the aristocracy ruled. Yet as the century progressed, the dominant social class became the bourgeoisie. The spa, like many other social, cultural, and political institutions became *bourgeois* or *bürgerlich*. As the middle classes came to populate the spas in increasing numbers and as their economic resources outstripped those of the aristocracy, their desires and priorities set the tone. For these resorts were commercial enterprises, often supported by the state, in intense competition with each other. In order to succeed, a spa had to offer what its paying customers wanted, or they would move on to a rival resort.

A wide range of activities was to be found at the spa: gambling, diplomacy, courtship, social interaction and representation were all important. Yet a core part of the experience, often neglected, is medicine.

For all the amusements that a spa offered, it was still at its core a place for medical treatment, where leisure and curing mixed in complementary fashion. Like leisure, curing was serious business.

The medicine of the fashionable spa world reveals a spectrum of competitive medical thought. Just as the nineteenth century was a formative time for middle-class identity, it was equally so for the modern science of medicine. As recent scholarship has shown,[1] this was the time of medicalization, during which the authority and position of scientific, positivistic academic medicine was established, while dissenting opinions were discredited and repressed. This result was not ensured, but was achieved by a complex interaction of the medical community and the state authorities and a shift in the attitudes of patients themselves. The rise to dominance of scientific medicine was not solely a top-down authoritarian procedure, but rather the product of an interplay of forces.

The spa offers a unique opportunity to the historian for the study of this process. Reflecting as it does middle class attitudes and the diversity of medical thought, the spa allows for examination of the relationship between medicine and society in this crucial formative period. With its middle class clientele seeking medical treatment of one form or another, and its practitioners representing competing schools of medical thought, the spa, although limited in space and scope, was diverse enough to yield illuminating examples of this dialogue between patient and practitioner, between state, medical establishment, and outsiders.

Several interpretive questions that bear upon this study have emerged from the debate over professionalization, medicalization, and patient autonomy. Alternatives to academic, allopathic medicine did gain popularity, yet establishment medicine ultimately came to dominate the world of medicine, both in practice and in attitudes. Was it the authoritarian-minded medical practitioner enforcing a monopoly over the

[1] See Michel Foucault, *The Birth of the Clinic; an Archaeology of Medical Perception* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1973) [1st American ed.]). Translated from the French (*Naissance de la clinique*) by A.M. Sheridan Smith. For the German context, see also Claudia Huerkamp, *Der Aufstieg der Ärzte im 19. Jahrhundert: vom gelehrten Stand zum professionellen Experten: das Beispiel Preussens* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1985); Paul Weindling, *Health, Race and German Politics between National Unification and Nazism, 1870-1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989); Jens Lachmund and Gunnar Stollberg, eds., *The Social Construction of Illness and Medical Knowledge in Past and Present* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 1992). For an overview of the recent trends in the concept of medicalization, see also Robert A. Nye, "The Evolution of the Concept of Medicalization in the Late Twentieth Century," *Journal of History of the Behavioral Sciences* vol. 39, no. 2 (Spring, 2003), 115-129.

medical "market," acting in conjunction with the state, or a shift in mentalities and attitudes that precipitated this development? How did these two factors intersect and influence each other? Or on the other hand, was the development through which the traditional ideal of cultured generalists was splintered in favor of specialization more important? [2] Although at first it may seem far too limited and unique a world in which to examine these questions, in many ways, the very limitations of the spa offer a manageable and masterable space in which these and other questions can be studied.

It ought to be clear that much research remains to be done on this fascinating historical phenomenon. Because both medicine and society, particularly middle-class society, are well-represented in this milieu, it offers a forum quite suitable for an investigation of the intersections between the two, an investigation that has not yet been satisfactorily undertaken for the German context in particular.

German spa medicine was caught in the tension between academics and dissenters. This was particularly visible in the large, fashionable spas, or *Modebäder*, of which Baden-Baden was one of the most prominent. While certain smaller spas perhaps more clearly represented the alternative camp, most notably Wörishofen, home to the movement around Vincenz Priessnitz, a lay practitioner with no medical training, the *Modebäder* were host to the full range of conflicts outlined above. Spa administrations, usually subordinate to the local ministry of the interior and including academic physicians, were closely linked to the medical establishment of state and professional interest. At the same time, however, the field of balneology, as hydrotherapy came to be called after the 1850s, was struggling to maintain its position and reputation in the world of the medical academy and the medical community. Professionalization and medicalization are of particular interest in the *Modebäder*, as these lay on the fault line between alternative and academic, between the establishment and the resistance.

Over the course of the nineteenth century, the history of the spa can serve to outline developments in medicine which are hardly restricted to questions of practice and science, but which include questions of attitudes, both of practitioners and patients. As a prominent place both in the medical and social milieu, it can function as an historical laboratory for examining shifting mentalities. Medicine, tied as it is to modernity, is an important field of historical inquiry, and the spa represents an important

[2] Hans-Ulrich Wehler, *Deutsche Gesellschaftsgeschichte, Dritter Band: Von der "Deutschen Doppelrevolution bis zum Beginn des Ersten Weltkrieges, 1849-1914* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 1995), 735.

intersection of manifold social and scientific factors. Here, in the complex interaction of medicine and society, one can find explanations for how academic medicine came to dominance.

This question is worthy of study in any society, but it has a particular importance for German history. As the discussion of the professionalization of medicine in Germany suggests, German physicians acted in much closer cooperation with the state, and tended in time more toward conservative and indeed authoritarian practice. How the medical establishment fought alternative ways of thought, and tried to suppress them, can illuminate broader issues of society and mentality. The interaction of physicians and their patients, more generally, of medicine and society, can lead to a greater understanding of how authoritarian thought in general grew to be accepted by wide segments of the population. While this should not lead to a teleological search for Nazis lurking in nineteenth-century health spas, there is a link between the emergence of authoritarian thought in medicine and authoritarian political and social models that, in turn, contributed to the rise of National Socialism and may very well help account for the highly public role played by physicians during the Third Reich.

With this caveat in mind, the questions that this study will examine are ones of medicine and society in the spa. Possible answers to these questions can be sought in several areas of investigation, the first of which lies within the medical community. The manner in which professionalization manifested itself in the spa, and how professionalized, academic medicine asserted itself against practitioners outside the fold, is illustrative of the processes of exclusion of alternative ways of thought. Here the role of the physicians themselves, particularly within the state administrative structure, is a key area of examination.

The premise, however, that the acceptance of establishment medicine was also the product of patients' own developing attitudes, and not simply the result of the physicians' own professionalization projects, necessitates that the attitudes of the medical clientele be explored. This study will endeavor to use the *Modebäder* as a place to which patients were drawn, the sorts of decisions they made once there, and why they made them, all seen as reflective of their attitudes. In the spa as well, professionalized medicine grew more established as the century progressed; tracing the development of this trend, again in the spa milieu, can help illuminate the shift in particularly middle class attitudes toward medicine.

Beyond the enclosed spatial nature of the spa, other facets of the *Modebäder* make them well-suited to a study of the interaction of medicine and society. The *Modebäder* consisted of a mix of public and

private institutions. Spa administrations, while nominally public institutions, often had owners of private clinics, hotel owners, and balneological physicians (*Bäderärzte*) as key members in the state administrative council. In this relatively well-defined arena, public and private medical interests are closely intertwined. The influence of private practitioners, of various kinds, on state policies can be directly observed in the spa world.

These spas were in keen competition with each other for visitors. Thus Baden-Baden competed with Bad Ems and Wiesbaden, as well as with resorts in France and Austria such as Vichy and Karlsbad. Competition for patients meant that these institutions can be studied as sensitive barometers of changes both in the medical field and in the desires and values of potential visitors.[3] The competition for patients and guests meant that the *Modebäder* constantly had to assess and re-tailor their services to the desires of potential guests, or see them take their business to another spa.

Spa administrations, as representatives of both the state interest and the local spa community interests, were charged with the task of ensuring that their resort remained competitive and would thrive. Throughout the century, one can observe the measures which the administrations took to further develop their facilities, to advertise, and to attract guests. While these measures included the building of theaters, parks, and other recreational facilities, much of the effort was concentrated specifically on ensuring that the medical bathing facilities within the town, both public and private, were up to the standards demanded by a discerning public and continually modernized. Advertising, targeted both at physicians who may refer patients and to the general public, focused primarily on the health benefits of a stay in the spa. The form that these efforts took, while on the one hand clearly reflecting the beliefs of spa physicians regarding what was the current state of the art, also must have reflected what they believed would be effective in attracting guests. Such advertising constitutes an important source for this study.

The *Modebäder* and their medical practitioners had to be responsive to the desires of their potential clients, but their advertisements and prescriptions no doubt also had an influence in shaping these desires as well. Neither the "top-down" model of medicalization nor the patient autonomy model can be taken in absolute form; rather, an interaction of factors determined the establishment of academic medicine. The study of medicine and society in the fashionable thermal health spas in Germany can yield some answers to the questions of medicalization and the ongoing

[3] Edward Shorter, "Private Clinics in Central Europe, 1850-1933," *Social History of Medicine* 3, no. 2, (1990), 159-195.

professionalization of medicine during the formative nineteenth century. In a spatially and temporally enclosed environment, one can trace the establishment of academic medicine over other schools of medical thought, both in concrete practice through state encouragement, and in the minds of middle class patients. By examining the responses of spa administrations and private practitioners, as well as the testimonies of spa patrons themselves, one can come to a better understanding of the complex, mutually formative interaction between popular attitudes and the professionalizing agenda of the medical establishment.

This study draws on a variety of source material, published primary and secondary sources, nineteenth century guidebooks, memoirs, and letters, as well as unpublished archival materials. Throughout the nineteenth-century, a large number of works were published on spas and spa medicine, growing in number as thermal spas grew more fashionable.[4] Spa descriptions and guidebooks of various kinds were prevalent throughout the century, extremely useful in registering changing perspectives, claims, and contentions. In general, these books must be viewed as a form of advertisement aimed at varying target audiences. Many were written by practicing balneologists or *Bäderärzte*, some were directed either at fellow physicians who might refer patients to the author's spa (and practice), others at the general public, and some at both. Fewer in number, but equally informative, are the guidebooks written by a layperson for the general public. What these guidebooks all have in common is a focus on the medical aspects of the spas. They attempt to portray their respective spas in the most attractive light possible, although not always uncritically, in order to attract visitors. Similar to these guidebooks are spa or balneological periodicals, which were edited by spa physicians, and directed at both the medical community and the general public.

Archival sources were available for this study in near-overwhelming variety and abundance. In order to render the project manageable, and to allow a greater depth of archival research, a single spa, Baden-Baden, one

[4] See for example, Konrad Anton Zwierlein, *Ueber die neuesten Badeanstalten in Deutschland* (Frankfurt: J.D. Simon, 1803); J. Franz Simon, *Die Heilquellen Europa's mit vorzüglicher Berücksichtigung ihrer chemischen Zusammensetzung* (Berlin: Albert Förstner, 1839); Friedrich Morin, *Die vorzüglichsten Bäder und Heilquellen Deutschlands und der Nachbarstaaten, deren ärztlichen Hülfen, Einrichtungen, Sehenswürdigkeiten, Vergnügungen und Umgebungen. Ein Rathgeber für Bade-Reisende* (Berlin: Nicolaische Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1867); K. Weller, *Taschenbuch für Badereisende. Jahrbuch der Bäder, Curorte, Heilanstalten 1873*. 5. verbesserte Auflage (Berlin: Denicke's Verlag, 1873).

of the most fashionable, and indeed, trend-setting thermal spas of the nineteenth century, has been employed as a case study. The archival materials for the *Modebad* Baden-Baden are shared between two archives: the *Stadtarchiv Baden-Baden* [City Archive of Baden-Baden] and the *Badisches Generallandesarchiv Karlsruhe* [Badenese General State Archive in Karlsruhe]. The materials available in these two archives include the records and documents of the spa administration, both in the city and at the state ministerial level, reaching as far back as the seventeenth century, and including for the nineteenth century thousands of pages of administrative correspondence, police and financial records, construction contracts, deliberations regarding advertising strategies, medical field officers' reports and letters of complaint from dissatisfied visitors. These records are indispensable for the study of the official level, and offer considerable insight into the interaction of private medical interest and state policy, of the development of the spas, and efforts to attract visitors in competition with other spas. Correspondence with other spas, in Germany and elsewhere, as well as minutes of spa administrative association meetings are also housed in these archives.

Spa patrons and patients also left behind documentation that the historian can access as primary source material. A range of published letters and memoirs offer insight into the quality of the spa experience.[5] This basis has been augmented and supplemented by nineteenth-century works of fiction set in the spa by a range of authors of varying degrees of fame.

Press accounts of spa life were common in nineteenth-century middle-class newspapers, particularly in the very popular *Morgenblatt für gebildete Stände* [Morning Press for the Educated Classes] published in Stuttgart and Tübingen from 1807-1867. These articles are useful, but must be read critically, for often a vested interest lay behind the publication. The publisher of the *Morgenblatt*, and the articles' likely author, was none other than the renowned publisher of Goethe and Schiller, Johann Friedrich Cotta, who also owned one of the most prominent bathing hotels in Baden-Baden. Other articles were written by

[5] Most letters and diaries written by ordinary persons remain unpublished; a large collection is available in the Schiller Archive of Manuscripts in Marbach, Germany. Unfortunately, these materials are difficult to access, not due to restrictions but rather owing to the manner in which they are catalogued. The collections of the Schiller Archive are indexed by author name only; a thematic catalog does not exist. As a regrettable result of time constraints, the archive could not be properly exploited for purposes of this study.

authors working on commission from the spa administrations, and, of course, were biased witnesses.

This work is structured in a chronological-thematic fashion, tracing the development of medicalization and the formation of middle-class society within the spa from 1815 to 1914. The main text is bracketed by a prologue covering the pre-1815 history of the spa and an epilogue that addresses the role of physicians and medical authority under Nazism. The introductory chapter discusses the history of the spa in the period prior to 1815. Although this period is not expressly part of the study, it provides the background out of which the nineteenth-century spa proceeded to develop. The following two chapters examine the beginnings of the modern spa through mid-century. Chapter Two investigates the birth of the modern spa, in the period from 1805 to 1830. In spa development, this was a period of considerable state support and guidance. For spa-visitors, this period witnessed the transition from the early period in which a spa visit was in first order a social and cultural experience, into a more medical experience. In medicine, which helped shape spa patrons' experiences, this was the period of Romantic medicine, based largely in Schelling's natural philosophy, which emphasized the mysterious healing properties of water. This foundation was essential: for the remainder of the century, spa physicians would attempt–with only partial success–to shake off the legacy of this formative period.

The third chapter focuses on the period of mid-century transformation, from 1830 to 1871. After 1830, the *Modebäder* were well-established: facilities were expanding and the number and diversity of visitors rising. Spa patrons increasingly sought curatives, and physicians of all kinds proliferated. This is the period of "*antimedizinische Flucht*"[6] [anti-medical flight], in which many looked toward natural remedies. This atmosphere was conducive to spa development, but also to the rise of lay healers claiming to make use of the waters. The period also witnessed the first attempts to establish spa medicine as a medical specialty–balneology.

The final period of the study is of the *Modebad* in Imperial Germany, to 1914. This is the period in which professionalization was well underway; it is also the period which saw the rise of wider popular movements critical of medicine. In this period the debates and tensions came to their greatest expression. Spa administrations attempted to establish the authority both of academic physicians against so-called

[6] For this term, as well as many thoughts regarding periodization and valuable insights into the tension between alternative and 'conventional' medicine, I am indebted to Professor Wolfgang U. Eckart of the University of Heidelberg. Personal correspondence to the author, October 29, 1999.

quacks (*Kurpfuscher*), or practitioners lacking full academic training. At the same time, these physicians were engaged in efforts to establish the scientific credentials of their field, balneology, as a truly scientific discipline, equal to all others of academic medicine. Spa visitors fell across the spectrum in their expectations. The number of visitors was higher than ever, as was the use of the balneological facilities. Many visitors sought what the "official" spa offered, yet others still came seeking alternatives, the therapies and treatments that the "quacks" offered. This last section examines these tensions between "establishment" medicine and "quacks," and attempts to answer the question of the establishment of medical authority within the context of health insurance schemes, which have been assigned a prominent place in the development of professional authority in Germany.

CHAPTER TWO

A BRIEF HISTORY OF SPAS TO 1800

Balnea, vina, Venus–baths, wine and Venus. These words inscribed on a tomb in Rome still speak their message across the centuries to the contemporary visitor.[1] The Romans' fondness for baths and concomitant sensual pleasures is legendary. But the marriage of the ancient elements of fire and water in thermal springs, issuing forth from the earth and filling the air with their pungent aroma in mineral baths was enjoyed not only by the Romans, but in cultures as diverse as those of Japan and Mesopotamia. These natural spring waters, predated and outlasted the Romans. The Empire fell, and in the provinces *thermae* fell into ruin. Many of these same springs which once had warmed the aching joints of legionnaires were used, centuries later, to treat Goethe and Bismarck. These ancient mineral springs became the elemental heart of the modern health spa.

A fundamental question in need of address at the outset of this study is what precisely *is* a spa? The term itself is ambiguous, referring generally in contemporary times to a host of trendy resorts offering a wide range of treatments designed to prevent illness or restore health once it is lost. The therapies offered are usually presented as alternative, that is to say an alternative to now conventional academic allopathic medicine, and may include massage, diet, herbal remedies, traditional Chinese medicine, Indian ayurvedic medicine, assorted meditation techniques as well as other essentially esoteric approaches to healing. Often located in remote areas in order to offer a pure environment, this modern incarnation of the spa is nonetheless a familiar sight to urban dwellers who can easily indulge themselves with a brief healthful sojourn in one of hundreds of "day spas" devoted to beauty, usually found in more affluent neighborhoods.

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[1] *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum*, 6.15258. The full text as well as a translation of this passage of the inscription, *Balnea, vina, Venus corrumpunt corpora nostra, sed vitam faciunt b(alnea), v(ina), V(enus)* (Baths, wine, and sex ruin our bodies, but they are the essence of life –baths, wine, and sex) can be found also in Garrett G. Fagan, *Bathing in Public in the Roman World* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999), 319, #261.

A cursory glance at the *Los Angeles Times*, for example, quickly reveals advertisements such as one for a "retreat into wellness with Dr. Andrew Weil at Sycamore Mineral Springs Resort"[2] in central California, where in five days participants can learn from the popular health guru how to "meet the demands of living without being overwhelmed." They can brace themselves for the struggle with the resort's health conscious nouvelle-cuisine restaurant and its therapeutic and leisure opportunities such as yoga and golf, all for the modest price of just under three thousand dollars, per person, double occupancy.

The contemporary spa, then, combines non-conventional medical approaches to health and wellness with leisure and relaxation in luxurious surroundings for those with the means. This fact raises the question, however, as to whether the spa, either in the contemporary world or historically, represents anything more than a coddling of the rich by means of an appealing exclusive vacation, with the fig leaf of (to some, dubious) medical treatment. The purpose of the present study is neither to evaluate the contemporary spa, nor to trace its development into the present, yet the example of Sycamore Springs shows striking similarities to spas of the past. Even in its modern incarnation, the spa has its origins in the nineteenth century, when travel as a sort of pilgrimage to spa towns in search not of salvation but of salubrity reached its apex of popularity, particularly in western Europe. To the historian versed in the history of the spa, the advertisements for Sycamore Mineral Springs, although expressed in a more modern cultural idiom, are highly reminiscent of nineteenth-century promotional literature for places such as Baden-Baden or Wiesbaden. The promise of health and leisure were then, as now, offered at a premium price to those with substantial means, while skeptics questioned the value of spa medicine.

What can be said about the spa from an historical perspective? The contemporary use of the word term only captures part of what can historically be understood as a spa. A place for healing or, depending on one's perspective, coddling the wealthy, omits an essential element of the historical spa which nevertheless is alluded to in the name of our California example: thermal mineral water. German terminology, despite the great importance of spa culture, is not altogether clear. A spa can be referred to in German as a *Kurort* [place of curing] or depending on the size of the locality, a *Kurstadt* [cure town]. Yet a *Kurort* may offer only fresh air–an "air cure," for pulmonary conditions, i.e., a *Luftkurort.* A

[2] Advertisement in the *Los Angeles Times*, March 20, 2004, online edition, http://latimes.p2ionline.com/shoppingchannel/data/images/1109821.jpg.

proper spa may be referred to either as a *Badeort* or *Badestadt* [place of bathing or bath town], depending largely on the size of the municipality. Many of the more prominent spa towns contain either the word *Bad* [bath] in their names, such as Wiesbaden, or had the title conferred upon them by state authorities endorsing the salutary properties of the local springs such as Bad Ems or Bad Cannstatt near Stuttgart.[3] Yet bathing also includes seaside resorts, such as Norderney on the North Sea.[4] The precise definition of what constitutes a proper spa was and remains both slippery and contestable, but for the purpose of this study, a spa is understood as a resort town that offers therapy using thermal mineral water. Although other types of health resorts proliferated in the nineteenth century, mineral springs were the heart of the classic spa. Even as late as the 1970s, the Baltic seaside resort of Sopot (formerly Zoppot) felt mineral spring water important enough to go to the expense of drilling a deep well to offer the precious tonic from a fountain adjacent to the main medical clinic.[5]

Spas, then, require by definition mineral springs. These generally are found in mountainous areas and result from deep geological activity. One finds a belt of classic spas across the Pyrenees and in the Massif Central in France, in Southwestern Germany in the Black Forest and the Swabian Alb, in the Taunus mountains and the Rhineland, as well as in Austria, Bavaria, and topographically similar locales. It is in these areas that spas renowned for their waters are found, for example Vichy, Plombières, Evian, Bad Ems, Wiesbaden, Baden-Baden, and Bad Kissingen.

Much as contemporary spa promoters draw on the legacy of ancient health practices such as traditional Chinese medicine, to establish their credibility, nineteenth-century spa promoters were wont to make use of what they perceived, or wanted to have perceived by the public, as their own historical past. In German spas, this meant the legacy of the Roman past, especially after remains of Roman baths were unearthed and showcased early in the nineteenth century in many towns that then were popular spas, notably in Baden-Baden.

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[3] The addition of the prefix *Bad* to a town name was a sought after pedigree and promotionally valuable, even as late as the 1960s, when Cannstatt became Bad Canstatt, signifying that a town was not simply a town, but a spa, or *Kurstadt*.

[4] For a superb and pioneering study of the growth of seaside resorts, see Alain Corbin, *The Lure of the Sea: The Discovery of the Seaside in the Western World, 1750-1840.* Jocelyn Phelps, transl. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994).

[5] Author's personal observations. The fountain, and the plaque commemorating its installation, are still found in the resort town in the heart of the resort area.

The Romans' fondness for baths and elaborate, some would say decadently ostentatious, facilities is widely known. Many of the greater Roman *thermae*, like the modern thermal spa, housed much more than simply baths; they were home to physicians, exercise and physical therapy, libraries, and even theaters. The *thermae* were open to all who could afford the admission fee, with the well-to-do bathing several times a day as a sign of their position and ability to devote themselves to leisure rather than cleanliness. This arrangement provided the opportunity for a wide range of social interaction, from the innocuous to the intimate.[6]

The Roman bath followed the advancing legions into the far reaches of the Empire. Across the Roman world, a city or even a private residence of substance had to include a proper bath, displaying luxury and the then high-technology of heat and large clear glass windows.[7] Bathing culture was adapted to particular conditions in the provinces; baths in the Gallican provinces could often have large heated basins in contrast to those in more temperate areas of the Empire.[8] In towns where thermal water was available, baths were constructed to take advantage of the springs. As a result, many modern spa towns can trace their origins back to the Romans. Baden-Baden was founded as the Roman Aquae in A.D. 70 (later renamed Aurelia Aquensis), Aachen was once Aquae Granis, and so on.

Beyond the construction of city and private baths, the Romans pioneered the concept of the resort spa. As the best-documented example, the town of Baiae was well established in antiquity as a locale that had all the requisite features to create an ideal playground for the public, including, importantly, hot mineral springs.[9] In ancient times such luxury offended moralists. To Cicero, Baiae was "a resort which encourages licentious conduct and wasteful lifestyle –idleness, debauchery, beach parties, boat parties, feasts, drinking."[10] Nor was Seneca convinced of the

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[6] Vladímir Křížek, *Kulturgeschichte des Heilbades* (Stuttgart and Leipzig: W. Kohlhammer, 1990), p. 58.

[7] Klaus-Peter Goethert, "Badekultur, Badeorte, Bäderreise in den gallischen Provinzen," in Michael Matheus, ed., *Badeorte und Bäderreisen in Antike, Mittelalter und Neuzeit*. Mainzer Vorträge 5 (Stuttgart: Institut für Geschichtliche Landeskunde and der Universität Mainz/Fritz Steiner Verlag, 2001), 16-17.

[8] Gothert, "Badekultur, Badeorte, Bäderreise," 25 ff. See also Yaron Z. Eliav, "The Roman Bath as a Jewish Institution: Another Look at the Encounter between Judaism and the Greco-Roman Culture," *Journal for the Study of Judaism*, 31, no. 4 (November 2000): 416-454.

[9] Fikret K. Yegül, "The Thermo-Mineral Complex at Baiae and De Balneis Puteolanis," *Art Bulletin*, 78, no. 1 (March 1996): 137.

[10] Cicero, *Pro Caelio*, 15.35; also 16.38, 20.48-50, translated by and cited in Yegül, "The Thermo-Mineral Complex at Baiae," 137.

spa's appropriateness. After one brief stay, he described it as a "resort of vice (*deversorium vitiorum*)."[11] Baiae, for all its notoriety, was not the only resort of its kind in the Roman Empire; archeological evidence suggests that such places were also familiar in the provinces, including southwestern Germany. One such an establishment, near the Roman trade road from Trier to Mainz, had no other evident purpose other than providing a resort environment. The name of this resort has since been lost, but it is clear that it was associated with the cult of Asclepios, or in the Romano-Celtic region, Apollo Grannus,[12] and resembled the Hellenistic *Asclepieion*, dedicated in other regions of the Empire to Asclepios, the Greek god of healing, whose staff entwined with snakes still serves as the symbol of modern medicine.[13] The *Asclepieion* had many features that are later found in the modern thermal spa: varied medicinal use of mineral waters for a range of maladies, facilities for dining and rest, and a theater as well as other amusements. All of these, as with the modern spa, were regarded as important elements of the whole therapeutic experience.[14]

As the Roman Empire crumbled, however, so too did the culture of the baths. The famous baths of Rome itself fell into disuse; Roman towns east of the Rhine were often abandoned or destroyed and with them, their baths. Aurelia Aquensis disappeared entirely from the historical record at the time of the Germanic invasions in A.D. 260, until it reappeared as Baden in documents of the tenth century.[15] Some Roman baths such as Baiae may have continued to be used well into the Middle Ages,[16] but it is all but certain that in areas conquered by Germanic tribes, the waters and spas were abandoned. Although this legacy later provided inspiration for nineteenth-century imaginations, the modern Central European spa cannot claim an unbroken descent from the Roman *thermae*.

By the twelfth century, however, evidence in the form of manuscripts and claims, both authentic and forged, to mineral springs, testifies to a renewed interest in their use. Sources regarding the Early Middle Ages are

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[11] Seneca, "On Baiae and Morals," Letter 52, translated by and cited in Yegül, "The Thermo-Mineral Complex at Baiae," 137.
[12] Goethert, "Badekultur, Badeorte, Bäderreise," 28.
[13] See Michael T. Compton, "The Association of Hygieia with Asklepios in Graeco-Roman Asklepieion Medicine" *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences* 57, no 3 (2002): 312-329.
[14] Křížek, *Geschichte des Heilbades*, 35-36.
[15] Rolf Gustav Haebler, *Geschcihte der Stadt und des Kurortes Baden-Baden*, Second Edition (Baden-Baden: Verlag Dr. Willy Schmidt, 1969), 1: 40.
[16] Yegül, "The Thermo-Mineral Complex at Baiae," 138.

limited, but they do suggest that local watering places were indeed frequented. The statutes of the Zurich cathedral from 1376 promise the canons there biannual paid leaves for a trip to nearby Baden im Aargau, which was then a popular destination. Similarly, in the fifteenth century, high officials of the city of Nuremberg were entitled to a leave to visit a thermal bath.[17]

The fifteenth century witnessed a rapid expansion of thermal bathing establishments, either at so-called "wild baths" [*Wildbäder*] which offered open thermal waters in a provocatively dangerous environment of untamed nature, or more securely within walled towns which provided an element of security to vulnerable bathers.[18] Travel reports and letters from this period document a lively spa culture in popular destinations such as Baden im Aargau, Baden-Baden, and Wiesbaden. Bathers included the noble and burghers alike. In a relatively well-known account from 1416, an Italian Renaissance traveler, Poggio Bracciolini renders a vivid portrait of a sojourn in Baden im Aargau, detailing the socially elite visitors' frivolity and indulgence in lascivious pleasures. This literary evidence largely squares with artwork surviving from the period, which commonly portrays nude bathers of both sexes sharing not only a common basin, but uninhibited sexual expression as well.[19] Yet Poggio's account was likely an exaggeration, written to entertain a friend and obliquely to criticize Italian mores using the "noble savages" north of the Alps as a foil.[20] When balanced with other historical documents, such as Paracelsus' descriptions of thermal waters or a travel account by Hans von Waltheym, a German salt merchant, a more complex picture emerges. Certainly amusement and licentiousness were part of the experience, but this was more a diversion from the primary purpose of such a trip, which was curative.

Yet in spite of the healthful purpose of taking the waters, an image of libidinous carousing emerged that incensed moral opponents who lambasted the decadence and frivolity of the baths. Thus Cicero's contempt reappeared as a veritable leitmotif in perceptions of the spa and spa culture. On the one hand, the waters themselves were seen as a

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[17] Birgit Studt, "Die Badenfahrt. Ein Neues Muster der Badepraxis und Badegeselligkeit," in: Michael Matheus, ed., *Badeorte und Bäderreisen in Antike, Mittelalter und Neuzeit*, 35.

[18] Mathias Bitz, *Badewesen in Südwestdeutschland 1550 bis 1840* (Idstein: Schulz-Kirchner Verlag, 1989), 41.

[19] See for example the color plates in Gernot von Hahn and Hans-Kaspar von Schönfels, *Wunderbares Wasser. Von der heilsamen Kraft der Brunnen und Bäder* (Aarau, Stuttgart: AT Verlag, 1980), 68-72.

[20] Studt, "Die Badenfahrt," 43.

positive thing, but nudity and relatively loose atmosphere, some morally minded critics felt, undermined both proper mores and the curative effects of the waters. Such assaults had some concrete results: by the sixteenth century, many monastic orders, giving expression to the moralizing impulse which baths provoked, prohibited their members from undertaking a *Badenfahrt*, and if one was regarded as absolutely necessary for health reasons, strict moral guidelines were to be observed.[21] By the 1700s, communal bathing tubs, which had been the custom in the preceding centuries, virtually disappeared; bathing itself had become either a private matter in individual cabinets, or had fallen completely into disfavor. Fueled by the moralists' denunciations, an increased sense of shame regarding nudity and the very real spread of syphilis which had become endemic to urban bathhouses, the changing fashions of behavior were such that the middle and upper strata of society had nearly entirely eschewed daily bathing by the second half of the seventeenth century.[22]

Moralizing voices that condemned pleasure, however, were not the only voices to be raised. Aside from the tendency to condemn anything in the spa not strictly connected with curing, a contrary view sought to justify spa amusements as an integral and healthful part of the healing process. Exemplary for this new direction was Heinrich Bebel, an academic in Tübingen. For Bebel, amusement and curative bathing were intricately linked, working together in harmony. Both were necessary in order to achieve a successful cure. This is one of the earliest expressions of a theme that became central to spa culture: leisure at the spa was not supplementary to medicine, but in fact as much part of a therapeutic regimen as mineral waters, laxatives, and bloodletting.[23]

The net effect of these trends was a changed spa, although not necessarily changed in the ways that moralists would have envisioned. In place of extended baths in open basins, the drinking cure increasingly came into vogue–quite satisfactory, no doubt, to those offended by communal baths. But in place of the socializing that had previously taken place in the tubs, a new sociability came to the fore in the spa of the seventeenth century.

Until the 1600s, the spa was a gathering place for local elites and the occasional traveler. Baden-Baden hosted mainly visitors from nearby Strassburg, Baden im Aargau from nearby Zurich, and so on. The social composition of the curing public tended to represent a mix of wealthy city-

[21] Studt, "Die Badenfahrt," 48.
[22] Bitz, *Badewesen in Südwestdeutschland*, 137. See also Sigfried Gideon, *Geschichte des Bades*, (Hamburg: Europäische Verlagsanstalt, 1988), 32-34.
[23] Studt, "Die Badenfahrt," 48.

dwelling merchants, clergymen and the local nobility, mingling not infrequently with the poor sent for a cure on public alms. The communal basins of the sixteenth century hosted rich and poor alike, even the occasional horse could be found taking the same waters. By the dawn of the eighteenth century, however, the spa began to fill another role, functioning as a sort of summer court with a corresponding growth of exclusivity.

Spa towns enacted legislation aimed at the maintenance of order within the spa district. A clear purpose, of course, was to ensure the safety of wealthy patrons, who often became victims of crime. An indication of the variety of indignities they were subject to may be seen in the actions taken by Count Georg of Hessen-Darmstadt, who in 1630 designated a special "peace zone" in the spa town of Langenschwalbach, where "the carrying of weapons, shoving, striking, or even improper touching of persons" was punishable by having the offender's hand chopped off. Langenschwalbach, however, lacked city walls, and despite additional night watchmen, the measures could only be partially successful.[24] In more settled spa towns, such as Wiesbaden, the walls and city gates provided a minimal element of security, in that dubious characters could more easily be kept out of the town altogether.

Exclusion of "unsuitable" elements from the curing district of the eighteenth-century spa was important not just for the comfort and safety of the more "respectable" visitors, but rather also because the spa itself had been discovered by the state. In previous centuries, spa towns had attracted visitors by virtue of their waters and their guesthouses; by 1700 a new model of princely or state sponsorship was emerging. The most successful spas of the eighteenth century were those, which enjoyed state support. Spas were attractive, especially to small states, because they helped fill empty coffers. With this hope in mind, for example, Prince Georg August of Nassau launched a program of modernization and promotion in Wiesbaden in 1690. His successors continued his work, improving the gardens, attracting French and Savoy merchants and engaging traveling theatre companies, so that by 1765, Wiesbaden could be regarded as an exemplary case of successful spa promotion by state authorities.[25]

The desire among mercantilist-minded princelings to attract revenues to their territories was but one motive for spa promotion in the eighteenth

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[24] Martina Bleymehl-Eiler, "Das Paradies der Kurgäste' - Die Bäder Wiesbaden, Langenschwalbach und Schlangenbad im 17. und 18. Jahrhundert." in: Michael Matheus, ed., *Badeorte und Bäderreisen in Antike, Mittelalter und Neuzeit,* 69. This and all subsequent translations, unless otherwise noted, are my own [kw].

[25] Bleymehl-Eiler, "Das Paradies der Kurgäste," 60-63.

century. Of greater importance was a desire to create a showcase town. Much as Louis XIV built Versailles as a representation of the splendor of his monarchy, some lesser German princes turned to spa construction to represent their reign and advertise their glory. So, the small spa of Bad Brückenau near Fulda visibly and tangibly reflected the absolutist aspirations of the ruler in its high baroque palace and curing facilities.[26] This impulse gave rise to its own architectural style, with the emphatically palatial structures supplanting the sparely functional.[27] Key features of the spa, from the monumental drinking hall with relaxation spaces to the elaborately landscaped gardens for leisurely strolls, became typical fixtures of the aristocratic spa in the eighteenth century.

Aristocratic in its demeanor and accoutrements, the spa began attracting increasing numbers of middle-class patrons during the course of the eighteenth century. One of the key factors in this development was the conscious promotion of medicine and curing. Awareness of illness as something that could be ameliorated by the healing waters of the spa grew among the educated public at this time, drawing greater numbers of rich and poor, the infirm and the bored who hoped to recoup their health at resorts featuring natural springs.[28] Sensing this tendency, and eager to attract guests who would enhance the revenues of the prince-sponsor of the spa, many commissioned medical treatises as a form of promotional literature. Indicative of this trend was Baron Konstantin of Hesse who was interested in his spa Langenschwalbach as a financially profitable enterprise, sponsored "studies" of the medicinal benefits of the spring waters in the 1740s.[29] While luxury and high society might appeal to the aristocracy, the findings of science were more likely to attract the bourgeois reading public. Spa promoters, especially physicians, tried to cast as wide a web as possible, making near panacea claims for the healing waters in order to attract the largest number of ill and convalescents as possible.[30]

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[26] Burkhard Fuhs, *Mondäne Orte einer Vornehmen Gesellschaft. Kultur und Geschichte der Kurstädte 1700-1900.* Historische Texte und Studien, vol. 13 (Hildesheim, Zürich, New York: Olms Verlag, 1992), 27.

[27] Fuhs, *Mondäne Orte einer Vornehmen Gesellschaft*, 38-39.

[28] Barbara M. Benedict, "Consumptive Communities: Commodifying Nature in Spa Society." *The Eighteenth Century* 36, no. 3 (1995): 203. See also Reinhard Kuhnert, *Urbanität auf dem Lande. Badereisen nach Pyrmont im 18. Jahrhundert* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1984), 59-73.

[29] Bleymehl-Eiler, "Das Paradies der Kurgäste," 70.

[30] Kuhnert, *Urbanität auf dem Lande*, 60.

Medical treatment at spas no doubt drew a significant number of visitors, yet the intimate quarters of a small spa town also offered another attraction, perhaps equally as important, sociable communication and interaction. A summer sojourn in a spa allowed visitors to amuse themselves and, at the same time, to make new acquaintances or to renew old ones.[31] This supplemented, rather than replaced, the era's vibrant literary culture of letter writing to allow interregional contact between individuals. The spa, then, formed a sort of community, offering the leisure and curative opportunities of a retreat from urban life, while retaining the sophisticated character of an urban center, from which most of the middle-class guests came. As one contemporary observer and visitor to Pyrmont observed:

> One is far from the court and the city, and grand society, in peaceful environs; but the court, the city, and grand society are there, too; one is in the country, surrounded by all the trappings of the city.[32]

The outward symbols of princely and aristocratic power also lured middle-class visitors with social ambitions. The splendid thermal towns served as the summer courts of many princes, and as such, drew those seeking to integrate or ingratiate themselves with the centers of power. These spas, while exclusive to the extent that the poor and unsightly were marginalized or excluded, remained open to the "better" orders of society. Clearly, distinctions were made, not all were equal in the spa, but the relative openness of this courtly institution provided a unique environment in which the rising middle classes could participate, and thus reduce the tensions between prince, nobility and *Bürgertum.*[33] Because the German lands lacked a great national capital, like Paris or London, the German spa was particularly important as the provider of an urbane venue for social interaction.[34]

The spa, then, was only one stage for a development of much larger significance. The eighteenth century saw the beginnings of the entrance into elite society by the educated middle class. Certainly, this process had begun earlier, in the seventeenth or even sixteenth century with large merchant families operating in cities and towns, but it was in the

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[31] Kuhnert, *Urbanität auf dem Lande*, 77.
[32] Jens Baggesen, *Humoristische Reisen durch Dänemark, Deutschland und die Schweiz*. 4: 163 (Mainz, 1801), cited in Kuhnert, *Urbanität auf dem Lande*, 93.
[33] Fuhs, *Mondäne Orte*, 49.
[34] Reinhold Kuhnert, "Badereisen im 18. Jahrhundert–Sozialleben zur Zeit der Aufklärung," *Journal für Geschichte*, no. 1 (1987): 17.

eighteenth that the emergence of an educated elite, influential in areas of court, military, local politics, and state administration, as well as finances and trade, a new *Bürgertum*, conscious of itself and possessing a confident, trans-regional identity, began to coalesce.[35] These changes, much further advanced elsewhere, were slow to develop in German-speaking Europe, and the middle classes there were still far from imposing.[36] But its rise to power and significance in the nineteenth century began with its gradual penetration into elite circles. The spa offered this opportunity without much in the way of fanfare.[37]

The spa in the later eighteenth century was well-suited to play an important role in this process. Its relatively relaxed and inclusive atmosphere contributed to the erosion of the barriers between the *Stände*, within the bourgeois and to an extent, between bourgeois and noble, forming the beginning of a hybrid status, lying somewhere between an aristocratic and a bourgeois society.[38] Here the bourgeois could assert themselves, modestly, to be sure, always showing the proper respect in the presence of nobles. Such contact took many forms, for example, a bourgeois extending breakfast invitations to nobles, or shared participation in excursions or balls which in the past had been the exclusive realm of the aristocracy, or a shared taking of the waters in the *Trinkhalle*, where mineral water for therapeutic drinking was dispensed.[39]

This opportunity for shared experiences between bourgeois and noble was discernible enough to contemporaries to call forth a new term, "spa

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[35] Lothar Gall, *Von der ständischen zur bürgerlichen Gesellschaft,* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1993), 13-14.

[36] David Blackbourn, "The German Bourgeoisie: An Introduction," in: David Blackbourn and Richard J. Evans, eds. *The German Bourgeoisie. Essays on the Social History of the German Middle Class from the Late Eighteenth Century to the Early Twentieth Century* (London and New York: Routledge, 1991), 4.

[37] The emergence of the bourgeoisie in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries has been the subject of a considerable body of scholarly research. In addition to Gall, *Von der ständischen zur bürgerlichen Gesellschaft* and Blackbourn and Evans, *The German Bourgeoisie* (cited above), see for example, Werner Konze and Jürgen Kocka, et al. eds., *Bildungbürgertum im 19. Jahrhundert*. 4 volumes (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1985-92); Lothar Gall, *Bürgertum in Deutschland* (Berlin: Siedler, 1989); Lothar Gall, ed., *Stadt und Bürgertum im 19. Jahrhundert* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1990); see also the two current works of general synthesis by Hans-Ulrich Wehler, *Deutsche Gesellschaftsgeschichte*, 5 volumes (Munich: C.H. Beck, 1996-2003), and Thomas Nipperdey, *Deutsche Geschichte* 3 volumes, Brochierte Sonderausgabe (Munich: C.H. Beck, 1998).

[38] Fuhs, *Mondäne Orte*, 47.

[39] Kuhnert, "Badereisen im 18. Jahrhundert," 21.

freedom" (*Badefreiheit*). As one observer wrote, "…interaction is easy and unrestrained … Without reservation one can address anyone to whom one had been introduced, or even introduces oneself; one can approach any circle one desires to take part in the conversation."[40] This description of easygoing social freedom ought not be taken absolutely literally; it may have reflected wish as much or more than reality. The barriers between the *Stände* remained intact, and outside the spa, often impermeable. Inside the spa, however, the social boundaries seem to have become somewhat easier to cross. "Spa freedom," while not to be confused with equality, signified for the elite bourgeois guest a heady departure from the conventional deference due the aristocracy, and one can imagine, that even this appearance of complete freedom must have had an exhilarating effect. No doubt, it accounts for some of the spa's growing appeal for middle-class patrons.

The twilight of the eighteenth century brought with it significant disruption of the world of the aristocratic spa in the wake of the French Revolution and Napoleonic warfare. In its place, a new incarnation of the spa, oriented toward a moneyed bourgeoisie, gradually replaced the courtly predecessor. This new spa that came fully into its own in the early nineteenth century enjoyed state sponsorship, but it also developed into an unabashedly commercial enterprise, subject to market forces and dependent on pleasing the consumer. The aristocratic spas of the eighteenth century, few in number and fairly limited in size, did not altogether disappear but nor did they thrive in the new age. Pyrmont lingered on in obscurity while other spas emerged as the new haunts of *bon ton* society. Those that could not adapt to the new demands of a changing clientele or compete for their business were marginalized or disappeared entirely.[41]

The new spa that arose in the era of Romanticism was to attempt to invoke the legacy of the past as part of their appeal. The lack of direct continuity from Rome, certainly did not discourage nineteenth-century spa promoters from exploiting any shred of Roman legacy they could find. As shall be discussed in Chapter Three, museums exhibiting Roman artifacts were displayed prominently in Baden-Baden after 1804, elaborate steam bath facilities were constructed clearly based on Roman models, and guidebooks for visitors consistently evoked the Roman past of spa towns. Local histories written in the nineteenth century, too, made much of this

[40] H.M. Marcard, *Beschreibung von Pyrmont 1-2 und Ergänzungsband mit Kupferstichen* (Leipzig, 1784/85), cited in Kuhnert, "Badereisen im 18. Jahrhundert," 18.
[41] Fuhs, *Mondäne Orte*, 42.