

Disorderly

To be disorderly has two meanings: actively to offend the order of things as society sees it—say to drink or curse or expose yourself in public; to keep a messy house or business or sports center. In both cases, the notion of disorder implies an underlying agreement, say in social or educational or political life, about what behaviors are unacceptable in public. While orderly behavior suggests behavior unfolding from the natural development of a 'civilized individual,' disorderly behavior suggests the opposite, behavior undermining or sidetracking the development of the social individual.

Examples

1 Domestic Messiness

I have a personal history of messiness with clothes and dishes. I can perhaps blame my parents for some of my domestic disorder, but I can also blame myself, for not having corrected my weakness sooner. It was not until my third marriage that I saw the light, in regard to domestic order. Modeling my wife's practice did it. There she was washing every meal's dishes as soon as they were available, hunting down cobwebs in ceiling corners, ironing shirts and pants directly after washing and drying them. I tried out each of these practices, adding to them bed making and warming up of the car in the morning. I never backslide—it has been twenty years—and must conclude that, unlike other addictions—alcohol, drugs—the addiction to messiness requires no elaborate rehab, but only modeling practice, and the bracing discovery of an efficient life.

2 Breach of order

Like most middle class citizens I am a friend of social order, and make every possible effort to cause no social or public offense. (I particularly dread the idea of being arrested, which has not happened to me.) One breach of social order shocked me, when I was a graduate student at Yale. I was walking at midday in down town New Haven, when I noticed a heavy black woman across the street from me. She had been carrying parcels, which she laid down, and was lifting her dress to piss. After her skirt was up she squatted and pissed heavily, until rivers of urine were flowing down the busy sidewalk and into the street. Pedestrians scattered, tried to divert their course and keep their cool, but nonetheless the street became a scene of minor shock, for several blocks. No crime had been committed. The woman could not contain her urine. There was not much to say, but much to clean up.