

Figurations

Newsletter of the Norbert Elias Foundation

EDITORS' NOTES

- Tom Scheff received a Lifetime Achievement Award from the Sociology of Emotions section of the American Sociological Association at the ASA Annual Meeting in Washington DC in August. The University of Karlstad, Sweden, conferred a doctorate *honoris causa* on Tom in September.
- Barbara Walters has been appointed to a post in sociology at CUNY-Kingsborough.
- José Esteban Castro has been appointed a Lecturer in Development Studies at the London School of Economics.
- Bernard Lacroix has been appointed a member of the Institut Universitaire de France, and will be seconded from the Université de Paris X – Nanterre for the next five years. This amounts in effect to what in English would be called a Research Professorship. Bernard plans to bring to fruition his important research on the structure of politics in the nineteenth century, and to work on a number of other projects.
- For reasons of space, we have had to hold over to *Figurations* 15 an extended review by Eric Dunning of John H. Goldthorpe's book *On Sociology: Numbers, Narratives, and the Integration of Research and Theory* (Oxford University Press, 2000). Apologies to Eric.

■ Second Norbert Elias Amalfi Prize, 2001

The Academic Committee of the European Amalfi Prize for Sociology and Social Sciences, in co-operation with the Norbert Elias Foundation, announces the Second European Prize dedicated to Norbert Elias. The Prize consists in a sum of €1,000 and it will be awarded to a significant first work by a European author published in Europe between 1 January 1998 and 31 December 2000.

The Prize is awarded 'in commemoration of the sociologist Norbert Elias (1897–1990), whose writings, at once theoretical and empirical, boldly crossed disciplinary boundaries in the social sciences to develop a long-term perspective on the patterns of interdependence which human beings

weave together'. Norbert Elias was himself the first recipient of the European Amalfi Prize for his book *Die Gesellschaft der Individuen*. Now the Norbert Elias Prize is intended to draw attention to a promising sociologist starting his or her academic career. The first Norbert Elias Prize was awarded in 1999 to David Lepoutre for his book *Coeur de Banlieue*.

In order to nominate a book for the award, please send a letter of recommendation to

Segreteria del Premio Europeo Amalfi
Dipartimento di Studi Politici
Facoltà di Scienze Politiche
Università di Roma "La Sapienza"
Piazzale Aldo Moro 5 00185
Roma ITALY

In order that books written in other lan-

guages may receive fair consideration, it is requested that for books not written in English, French or German, a summary in English accompany the letter of recommendation.

Prof. Carlo Mongardini
Co-ordinator of the Premio Europeo Amalfi

■ Elias PhD Students Network

It is proposed to establish an international network of PhD students who are engaged in research using ideas (at least in part) derived from Norbert Elias.

As a first step towards putting them in touch with each other, a closed e-mail discussion list (Elias-PhD) has been set up. This will provide a convenient forum for discussion of academic questions of com-



Florence Delmotte

mon interest. Florence Delmotte of the Université Libre de Bruxelles, who is herself writing a thesis on 'The State Concept in Norbert Elias's Theory of Civilising Processes: An Epistemological Approach', has agreed to act as monitor of the list. (The list owner will be Kitty Roukens of SISWO in Amsterdam, since the owner has to hold a post in the Dutch academic system.)

To participate in the list, students must be working on a PhD or Masters degree. Thesis supervisors/directors are welcome to nominate their students for membership of the list, but will not themselves be allowed to take part in discussions.

At a later stage, it is hoped that it may be possible to bring members of the network together in conferences, and then perhaps supervisors would play some role. But that is for the future.

If you are a qualifying PhD or Masters student, or if you would like to nominate your PhD or Masters student(s) for membership of the network, please send a message including relevant e-mail addresses, to: florence.delmotte@ulb.ac.be

Florence will then send an e-mail application form to each student.

■ Johan Heilbron appointed Norbert Elias Professor at Utrecht

As successor to Nico Wilterdink, Johan Heilbron was recently appointed to the Norbert Elias chair for the study of long-term processes at Utrecht University in the Netherlands.

Johan Heilbron studied sociology at the University of Amsterdam during the 1970s. His work was initially marked by the widely discussed 'crisis of sociology', which had again raised a number of fundamental questions about the epistemological status of the social sciences, their historical development as well as about their actual or potential social functions. Particularly interested in French social science, Heilbron went to Paris in 1979 for a year of graduate studies with Pierre Bourdieu at the Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales (EHESS). Later he went back to Paris to become junior researcher at Bourdieu's Centre de sociologie européenne (1983-85).



Johan Heilbron

Besides conducting empirical research on the labor market for academics in the Netherlands, Heilbron's first publications dealt predominantly with the history, sociology and epistemology of the social sciences. Much of this work was concerned with developing a broader and more sociological view of the development of the social sciences. *The Rise of Social Theory* (Polity Press, 1995) for example, is an attempt to propose a predisciplinary history of sociology in France. It documents the rise of social theory in the Enlightenment, its scientisation in the decades around 1800, and concludes with an analysis of the formation of sociology in the work of Auguste Comte.

In 1990, Heilbron joined the newly founded department for the sciences of art and culture at Erasmus University in Rotterdam. He published *Kunst leren (The Apprenticeship of Art, 1992)*, a study of contemporary art schools, and directed a research project on transnational cultural exchange. A recently published paper, 'Towards a sociology of translations: book translations as a cultural world-system' (*European Journal of Social Theory*, 2 (4) 1999), is an outgrowth of the original project.

Awarded a stipend of the Royal Dutch Academy of Sciences (KNAW) in 1992, Heilbron became a fellow of the Amsterdam School for Social Science Research (ASSR). Broadening his interests in transnational relations, he became interested in various aspects of transnational society.

Two edited volumes are specifically connected with the Amsterdam circle of which he has been part. Together with Nico

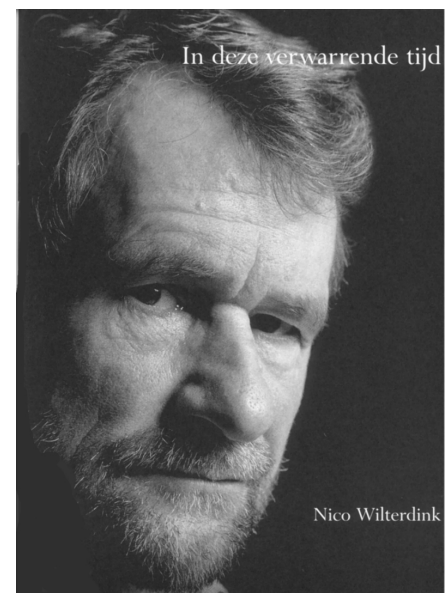
Wilterdink and Abram de Swaan he edited *Alles verandert* (Meulenhoff, 1997), a *liber amicorum* for Johan Goudsblom. With Geert de Vries he edited *De Draagbare De Swaan* (Prometheus 1999), an anthology of the writings of Abram de Swaan.

Besides being on the editorial board of the Norbert Elias *Gesammelte Schriften*, Heilbron is an editor of *Actes de la Recherche en Sciences sociales* (Paris), *Amsterdams Sociologisch Tijdschrift* (Amsterdam), *Cahiers Lillois d'Economie et de Sociologie* (Lille), and the *Academische Boekengids*. He is on the International editorial board of the *European Journal for Social Theory* and the *Revue d'histoire des sciences humaines*.

Since the end of 1996, Johan Heilbron has worked in France. After being a member of the Centre Lillois d' Etudes et de Recherches Sociologiques et Economiques (CLERSE) at the University of Lille I for some years, he is now a member of the the Centre de sociologie européenne (CSE) in Paris. His most recent work is in the domain of economic sociology; in 1999 he was one of the founders of the European Network for Economic Sociology.

■ Nico Wilterdink gives inaugural lecture in Amsterdam

Nico Wilterdink, who until 1999 was the part-time Norbert Elias Professor of Sociology at the University of Utrecht, has been



Nico Wilterdink

Nico Wilterdink

appointed Professor of Cultural Sociology at the University of Amsterdam. He gave his inaugural lecture on 19 March 2000, in the Oude Lutherse Kerk. He took as his title 'In these Confusing Times: A Cultural Sociology of Postmodernism'. In it, he explored postmodernism as a multi-faceted cultural movement in which the label of 'postmodernism' acquired various overlapping meanings. Postmodernism was the work of intellectuals (in the broad sense) in various relatively autonomous cultural fields. It emerged and spread as a result of four interrelated but distinctive processes: (1) changes in the arts, literature and architecture; (2) political and ideological changes (in particular Marxism's loss of intellectual appeal since the 1970s); (3) the emergence of new 'identity movements'; and (4) changing competitive relations within and between scholarly and scientific fields. These processes are related to broader social transformations – among them the processes of individualisation, the commercialisation of leisure, and the growing impact of the mass media – which might be regarded as indicative of the transition to a 'postmodern' society.

The Dutch text of Nico's lecture was published as a pamphlet by the University of Amsterdam, and also in the *Amsterdams Sociologisch Tijdschrift* 26 (4) 1999: 441–63.

■ Modern Classics

In an article entitled 'What is Classical about Classical Social Theory?', in the April 2000 issue of *Perspectives*, the newsletter of the Theory Section of the American Sociological Association, Ira J. Cohen argues that the genius of the recognised classics of Marx, Weber and Durkheim 'rests in their ability to maintain their firm, analytical grip on social life while they infuse their sub-texts with beliefs based upon some of the most profound values Western culture has to offer'. He continues:

'Is it possible to imagine social theorists writing classics today? Or is a contemporary classic an oxymoron? Leaving aside the fact that it takes some time before the full implications of a classic become clear, there seems to me to be no reason why theorists should be unable to write classics today. But in practice very few have been written since the end of World War I. Some might nominate Mead, or Parsons or

Habermas, but they all seem too dry to me. I think certain works by Norbert Elias will be regarded as classics some day. Perhaps, if an interpreter manages to adduce the proper implications from the works of Erving Goffman (who sometimes seems cold and amoral to me) his *Interaction Ritual* may rise to a classical position. ...'

■ RESPONSES DANIEL GORDON'S 'THE CANONISATION OF ELIAS IN FRANCE'

Editor's Note

When I included Daniel Gordon's article 'The Canonisation of Elias in France' in *Figurations* 13, I thought it best to signal in the Editors' Notes that I was fully aware that it would cause offence to some readers. That it did so is evident in the responses printed below, some of which were written immediately after issue 13 appeared and others just before issue 14 went to press. I have no regrets about including it – Gordon made some thought-provoking points. For myself, I was most irritated by his interpretation of Elias's attitude towards Max Weber. Certainly, Elias criticised Weber for adopting *homo clauses* assumptions, and elsewhere he relates such assumptions to a naïve egocentrism, but it is a sort of false syllogism (based on a misunderstanding of what Elias called 'the sociogenetic ground rule') to represent Elias as saying that Weber 'never developed intellectually beyond the level of a child'. Apart from that, I was led to reflect that although I am of course interested in Elias's life history and intellectual development because I knew him as a friend, my own chief interest has always been in how Elias's ideas – however he arrived at them – can be used and developed in subsequent social scientific and historical research. Gordon himself has contributed to that in his book *Citizens without Sovereignty*, but has also become interested in Elias's intellectual biography *per se*, as have several other scholars.

Daniel Gordon has seen the responses below before they went to press, but I have invited him to take the time necessary for a considered rejoinder to appear in *Figurations* 15.

SJM

Hermann Korte writes:

Daniel Gordon's lectures at the Collège de France were also a postlude to a controversy about the appointment of a successor to a very famous Professor. Such debates do not take place only in Paris – they are nothing unusual. Nor is it exceptional that opposition to a candidate take the form of a critique ostensibly of a third party. Gordon's criticisms of Elias had also been used to stir up opinion against Chartier. Such debates are not for the squeamish, but neither is life, especially academic life. It is a question only of whether the minimal academic standards are followed in such squabbles. In Gordon's case, I have some doubts about that, but here I shall make only a couple of brief points.

For reasons of space I shall pass over Gordon's critique of Elias's reading of Max Weber, as well as his astonishing use of Alfred Weber and Karl Mannheim. I am concerned with Gordon's claim to 'shed some light on little-known elements of nationalism [and] anti-Semitism ... in Elias's thought. These aspects were indeed hitherto unknown, and with good reason: the evidence Gordon brings forward is inadequate to support his hunches.

Gordon derives the charge of nationalism from the fact that, in *Über den Prozess der Zivilisation*, Elias compared France and Germany with each other. That Elias was undoubtedly descended from the German Jewish intellectual middle class is, for Gordon, proof that Elias was confirming German prejudice against France. The previous interpretation, that through this contrast Elias was uncovering the ideological kernel of the two national societies, is not contradicted by Gordon's argument. In the end, if Elias points to any shortcomings, they are German. Jürgen Kocka, in his lecture at Bielefeld on 1 December 1992 praised and emphasised the mixture of critical distance and intimate knowledge in Elias's outsider's viewpoint: 'Elias, the liberal German Jew, is a European, orientated to Western Europe, greatly distanced from German national, conservative and *völkisch* ideologies'. Rich evidence for that can be found in *Humana Conditio* and *The Germans*. It is Gordon who is guilty of not providing evidence for his accusation of cryptic nationalism.

In contrast to the allegation of nationalism, which Gordon at least attempts to ground in

a publication by Elias, the accusation of anti-Semitism is made only indirectly. From Peter Gay's assertion that even Jews could be anti-Semitic, Gordon draws the underhand conclusion that Elias is an instance of it. This indirect form of reasoning would be less than convincing in support of a lesser criticism, but the gravity of the charge of anti-Semitism puts it quite beyond the pale.

What does Gordon know about Elias's strong involvement in the Zionist youth association Blau-Weiß, or about his role among Jewish student leaders? Does he know the 1929 essay 'Zur Soziologie des Antisemitismus'? Does he know that Elias spoke up for Zionism up to the early 1950s? I do not believe Gordon knows about any of these things. He makes little attempt to support this grave accusation from Elias's writings. That of anti-Semitism is simply said without thinking. About his motives, I have only suspicions (of malice), so I shall remain silent about them.

The work, the person and the times through which he lived are interwoven with each other in the process that was Elias's life. Every generation will read his books anew and perhaps differently, and perhaps interpret his life and work differently too. So, as my readers will know, I am against any kind of hagiography. But I am in favour of people keeping to minimal standards of academic discourse. (At any rate, anyone who wants to be taken seriously.)

Nico Wilterdink writes:

Figurations 13, June contains a remarkable contribution by the American historian Daniel Gordon under the title 'The canonisation of Elias in France: some critical thoughts'. According to Gordon, Elias is 'canonized' in France to such an extent that 'a taboo' appears to exist in this country 'against any criticism of Elias'. The author wishes to 'break' this taboo and explain it at the same time. He detects several weaknesses in Elias's work which are, he thinks, paradoxically connected to its uncritical acceptance in France.

I do not think that any of Gordon's criticisms holds water, but I will confine myself here to what for him seems to be the most important one: Elias's alleged German and anti-French nationalism which had a detrimental impact on his thinking. This can be seen in particular, Gordon believes, in Elias's analysis of

German 'culture' versus French 'civilisation' in the first two chapters of *The Civilising Process*, 'which owed much to a tradition of anti-French discourse among conservative German academics'. In this way, Elias 'sustained an old prejudice against France'. And this prejudice 'happens to appeal to French intellectuals seeking a critical perspective to their own society'. Hence his canonisation in that country.

All this I found quite surprising, not because something new about Elias or French intellectuals is revealed, but because it is so far-fetched, and so wrong. One wonders how Gordon got these ideas. Several things about it have been said already in a discussion on the Internet, and my argument will overlap with the remarks by some participants in this debate, in particular Artur Bogner and Eric Dunning. But as Gordon published his thoughts in *Figurations*, a response here seems to me appropriate.

Gordon's interpretation of what Elias wrote on German 'culture' versus French 'civilisation' can only be understood as a confusion of normative ideology and sociological analysis, of *emic* and *etic* or, in Eliasian terms, of we-perspective and they-perspective. He seems to think that Elias by analysing the meanings of the German concept of culture and its sociogenesis, sustained and even propagated the concept and the ideas related to it. But as anyone familiar with his work knows, the contrary is the case. The German concept of culture, Elias writes on the first pages of *The Civilising Process*, 'refers essentially to intellectual, artistic and religious facts, and has a tendency to draw a sharp dividing line between facts of this sort, on the one side, and political, economic, and social facts, on the other'. Moreover, the concept reifies human accomplishments, is static, and emphasises essential differences and sharp boundaries between human groups. All this is contradicted by Elias's own sociological approach, which opposes the reification of intellectual and artistic accomplishments, the static view of human social life and the essentialising of group differences, including national differences. By pointing out how the opposition between 'culture' and 'civilisation' came to express national differences between Germany on the one hand and France and England on the other, Elias does not essentialise these differences himself but describes and explains how this happened in a discourse among, in particular, members of the German intellectual bourgeoisie.

In short, Elias treated *Kultur* as an ideological concept and rejected it as a tool for sociological analysis. He went even so far (deviating in this respect from the standard social scientific vocabulary) as to avoid the use of 'culture' as a sociological term altogether. Instead, he preferred 'civilisation' as the less reifying, more universalistic and more dynamic concept. As we know, he presented his theory as a theory of 'the process of civilisation', not a theory of culture. In other words, if Elias made a choice among the conceptual pair of civilisation and culture, he chose for French 'civilisation' rather than German 'culture' – though he also took distance from the normative and ideological connotations of 'civilisation' as it was commonly used.

For those interested in Elias's biography an intriguing question is why and how he came to this position, if genius is an insufficient explanation. If he was influenced by his teacher Alfred Weber, it was in a negative, dialectical way, since his whole approach is antithetical to Alfred Weber's *Kultursoziologie*. As a student Elias had been immersed in German *Kultur*, and presumably he had shared many of its assumptions. We may speculate that his later detached sociological analysis helped him to liberate himself from these assumptions, and that his incisive critique of the German concept of culture implicated in his approach was also a kind of self-critique – a critique of views he once cherished himself. Future biographical research might clarify this by elucidating how the young idealistic student who took an active part in the Zionist Blau-Weiss movement developed into the mature historical sociologist who wrote *The Court Society* and *The Civilising Process*. In any case, the future biographer (in the line of Mennell, Goudsblom, Korte and Van Krieken) will have to make serious study of Elias's published work and treat it as the primary source of his thinking, instead of misreading (or nonreading) and misinterpreting that work on the basis of some preconceived and ill-founded ideas.

Since there are no appreciable traces of German, anti-French nationalism in Elias's theories, there is no basis for Gordon's claim that it is for this reason that Elias appeals to left-wing French intellectuals. The argument sounds awkward anyway: as if these intellectuals needed old German, anti-French prejudices to be 'critical of their own society'. Pierre Bourdieu for example – to take the most famous among these in-

tellecuals – cannot be said to be ‘anti-French’ in any meaningful sense. And his admiration for Elias is not based on a shared affinity with a tradition of German nationalism but, on the contrary, has to do with a shared negative view of ideas associated with that tradition. It should be added that someone like Bourdieu is not uncritical of Elias. Gordon’s assumption that any criticism of Elias is taboo in France, is demonstrably untrue, even if we read for ‘France’ the French intellectuals who admire his work.

Pieter Spierenburg writes:

As Daniel Gordon calls himself an early modern scholar, he provokes me, an historian of pre-industrial Europe, into a reaction. I will focus, however, on his comments on Elias’s treatment of the civilisation-culture distinction, which is essentially about France and Germany from the mid-eighteenth century to the 1930s. As it happens, a few years ago I re-read the first section of *The Civilising Process* (in the German 1969 edition which I have) for a new course I am giving together with a colleague who is a specialist in non-western history. Themes such as ‘images of the other’ and ‘we- vs. they- perspectives’ are prominent subjects in that course, while we use Elias’s work as one of our theoretical points of reference. It seemed perfectly logical to discuss his analysis of the development of the civilisation–culture distinction with my students, since it is all about images and discourse. Therefore, Gordon’s remarks (in *Figurations* – I have not read his *Citizens without Sovereignty*) are especially puzzling to me: he appears to reproach Elias for using discourse as a source for an analysis of discourse. Gordon identifies the German intellectual tradition Elias deals with as anti-French and that settles the matter. Because the discourse and images which Elias studied are bad, his analysis must also be bad.

Of course, we are all unconsciously influenced by prejudices which are a function of our position in society and which future generations of scholars may ‘unmask.’ It is good historical practice, if you argue that a scholar’s reading of the sources is biased, to show that the bias results from one or the other ideology. However, this requires that you first demonstrate convincingly that the evidence points in a different direction. Thus, Elias states that most German intel-

lectuals in the nineteenth century thought *Kultur* superior to *Zivilisation* and that the opposite view prevailed among other nations. He quotes the writer Theodor Fontane, for example, who opposed the German way of life, not to the French but the English. If Gordon came up with numerous citations from nineteenth-century German intellectuals who preferred ‘civilization’ to ‘culture’ and admired the English, then he would have proved Elias wrong. In that case, Elias had made a highly selective use of the available evidence. Gordon entirely fails to demonstrate this. Moreover, it completely eludes me in what way Elias’s discussion of the development of ideas in France is unfavourable to the French. After thirty years, Gordon is the first to propose this reading to me. Surely, at some point Elias shifts from an analysis of concepts and their social embeddedness to a consideration of actual changes in human behaviour. That he chose the term ‘civilisation’ as a marker for these changes hardly supports Gordon’s contention that he was influenced by a German nationalist attitude.

For Gordon, a scholarly point of view is essentially characterised by the political belief it supposedly represents, which strikes me as particularly old-fashioned. When I took my first courses as a history student, one had Catholic and Socialist historians, but from the 1970s this automatic connection has largely disappeared from European historiography. To appreciate Chartier’s scholarly arguments, I don’t need to know to which political party, if any, he is affiliated and, for this debate, I find it uninteresting to speculate for whom Gordon will vote in the coming presidential election. A good scholar, to me, is a person who points to unrealistic elements in all political beliefs.

A final point about courts. In 1971, when I started working on my master’s thesis on the development of civilisation in the early modern Netherlands and discussed it with Norbert Elias, he strongly emphasised that there were more roads towards modern democratic society than just via court society. Of course, the Dutch case represented one such road and he suggested that I focus on bourgeois culture. In the end, I concluded that courtly–aristocratic elements were more prominent in the Dutch Republic than he and I – and earlier historians – had assumed. Gordon might say that this was because I am of working-class descent and, consequently, hate the bourgeoisie

even more than the aristocracy. I tend to think it was because of the evidence.

Godfried van Benthem van den Bergh writes:

Reading Daniel Gordon’s piece in *Figurations* 13 I was sadly surprised. Is it still possible to present such a caricature of Elias’s work? I wanted to say to him what John McEnroe famously said to an umpire: ‘You cannot be serious’.

Elias’s process sociology is clearly a-normative and cannot lend itself to ‘canonisation’. Did Daniel Gordon ever read Elias’s plea for ‘the detour via detachment’? Elias always insisted that sociologists should not ask whether events or processes are good or bad, but how they are interconnected to each other. He saw normative or ideological concerns as an obstacle to proper understanding and explanation.

It is therefore ridiculous to ask whether Elias was a ‘man of the left’ or was influenced by nationalist prejudices against France. Daniel Gordon is a Frère Jacques, fast asleep. His dogmatic slumber prevents him from understanding that the culture–civilisation distinction is not analysed by Elias in terms of static characteristics, but as a process by which the self-image of social classes in France and Germany turned into the self-image of the two countries themselves. His analysis at the same time clarifies the development of the meanings of the two closely related concepts. But Daniel Gordon prefers the static term civility, suggesting Elias used that too, *quod non*.

Did Daniel Gordon read *The Germans*? Probably not. Otherwise he might have saved himself from libel. This is what he does. He first quotes Peter Gay ‘German Jews could be not only nationalistic but also anti-Semitic’. He just assumes that this is true, and does not even provide any information about the context in which Gay made his statement. Then without further ado he applies Gay’s assertion to ‘Elias’s case’, suggesting that ‘identity tensions’ (?) made him anti-Semitic’. Libel. With such a violation of the rules of scientific argument Daniel Gordon places himself outside the academic community.

Daniel Gordon’s argument should be com-

pared with Elias's criticism of Weber's 'ideal types'. My patience has run out, so the reader should judge for him or herself. Our Frère Jacques had better wake up, step outside his canon and make amends.



RECENT BOOKS AND ARTICLES

Peter Burke, Brian Harrison, and Paul Slack, eds, *Civil Histories: Essays presented to Sir Keith Thomas*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000. xiv + 399 pp. ISBN: 0-19-820710-7.

Sir Keith Thomas is one of the great British historians of our age, author of two highly influential books, *Magic and the Decline of Witchcraft* (1971) and *Man and the Natural World* (1983), and of an immense number of essays and published lectures. Early in his career, his image was as something of an iconoclast: he lectured on women's history in the late 1950s (when, as his minuscule audiences in Oxford proved, there was no demand for it), and championed the use of concepts and theories from the social sciences – anthropology especially, but also sociology and psychology – when British historians were even more uniformly die-hard Rankeans than they are now. So it comes strangely as a shock to realise that this exceptionally interesting *Festschrift* is presented to him on the occasion of his retiring as President of Corpus Christi College, Oxford, and that in the meantime he has attained the dizzying distinction of serving as President of the British Academy (1993–97).

It came to me even more strangely as a shock to be informed by the book's editors, as a passing matter of fact, that 'Norbert Elias has been important to him since his Neale Lecture on "The Place of Laughter in

Tudor and Stuart England' [*Times Literary Supplement*, 21 January 1977, pp. 77–81]'. There is no rational reason for any such shock: Keith reviewed the first volume of *The Civilising Process and Human Figurations* (the *Festschrift* presented to Elias on his eightieth birthday) in the *New York Review of Books*, 9 March 1978, pp. 28–31. Besides, I remember discussing Elias with him in the early 1980s when he was working on *Man and the Natural World* and I on *All Manners of Food*. True, the discussion of Elias in the 1976 Neale Lecture came two years before anything much of Elias's work had appeared in English, and I would guess that (like me) Keith Thomas first read *The Civilising Process* in French. He always had a keen eye for important ideas, and cited Foucault as early as 1963. So why was I at all surprised? – because, when I thought about it, those of us who became enthusiastic about Elias's ideas before they were widely known came to think of ourselves very much as a small outsider group. On reflection, I think we came partially to take the established groups' they-image of us an eccentric minority into our own we-image. Something of that lingers, and caused the frisson when I saw it taken for granted that Elias had 'been important for' someone like Keith who has scaled the very highest peaks of the British academic establishment.

This importance is equally taken for granted by several of the contributors to *Civil Histories*, who cite Elias either prominently or in passing. These include:

Peter Burke, 'A Civil Tongue: Language and Politeness in Early Modern Europe', pp. 31–48.

Euan Cameron, "'Civilised Religion" from Renaissance to Reformation and Counter-Reformation', pp. 49–66.

Martin Ingram, 'Sexual Manners: The Other Side of Civility in Early Modern England', pp. 87–110.

Sara Mendelson, 'The Civility of Women in Seventeenth-Century England', pp. 111–26.

Jonathan Barry, 'Civility and Civic Culture in Early Modern England: The Meanings of Urban Freedom', pp. 181–96.

J. A. Sharpe, 'Civility, Civilising Process, and the End of Public Punishment in England', pp. 215–30.

Perhaps just as significant are the titles of some of the others among the twenty contributions which do *not* cite Elias directly:

for instance, Prys Morgan's 'Wild Wales: Civilising the Welsh from the Sixteenth to the Nineteenth Centuries' (pp. 265–84), and Paul Johnson's 'Civilising Mammon: Laws, Morals and the City in Nineteenth-Century England' (pp. 301–20). There the use of the word 'civilising' is taken for granted in a way that was inconceivable in the mid-1960s when, as Eric Dunning loves to relate, even the most delicate allusion to concepts like development or civilisation was sufficient to provoke angry shouts of 'Hobhouse! Hobhouse!' by a leading British sociologist.

SJM

Wolfgang Homerich, ed., *Norbert Elias: Im Gespräch mit Hans Christian Huf*. Zeugen des Jahrhunderts series, Berlin: Ullstein, 1999. 112pp. ISBN: 3-548-33256-0 (pb)

This attractive little book, in the Ullstein 'Witnesses of the Century' series, contains the text of an extended conversation between Elias and Hans Christian Huf on 21–22 October, 1987. It covers similar ground to the better-known 1984 interview with Arend-Jan Heerma van Voss and Abram van Stolk, included in *Reflections on a Life*, but with interestingly different nuggets of detail. There are some unfamiliar photographs of Elias and his teachers and associates, and useful text boxes which briefly explain such matters as the Frankfurt School and Popper and the Positivism Dispute. This is a useful book to put in the hands of German-reading undergraduates or others coming newly to Elias and his ideas.

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Gabriele Klein and Annette Treibel, eds, *Skepsis und Engagement: Festschrift für Hermann Korte*. Hamburg: Lit Verlag, 2000. viii + 437 pp. ISBN: 3-8258-4638-5

This *Festschrift* was presented Hermann Korte on the occasion of his farewell lecture at Hamburg on 28 March, 2000, reported in *Figurations* 13. Space precluded our giving further details of its contents in

that issue. The title of the book both alludes to major publications by two of Korte's most important teachers – Helmut Schelsky's *Die skeptische Generation* (The Sceptical Generation) and Norbert Elias's *Involvement and Detachment* – and describes the attitudes which characterise Korte's political and academic work. Written by friends, colleagues and former students, the *Festschrift* reflects his main areas of research: urban sociology, migration, figurational sociology and socio-biographical research, covering aspects of Korte's life as well as recent discussions and developments in these fields.

An introductory section includes the editors' preface together with congratulatory messages from the President of the University of Hamburg, from members of the Department of Sociology at Hamburg, and from Hermann's former colleagues at the University of Bochum. The rest of the essays are grouped under four headings:

I Soziologie als Prozess: Erweiterung der Zivilisationstheorie

Johan Goudsblom, 'Das Paradox der Pazifizierung'

Heike Hammer, 'Emotionen als soziale Prozesse: Der Beitrag der Zivilisationstheorie zur Emotionssoziologie'

Kenneth Anders, 'Synthetische Menschheitsgeschichten: Überlegungen zur symbolischen Teilhabe am Zivilisationsprozess'

Stephen Mennell, 'Network Theory and the Social Constraint towards Self-Constraint'

II Etablierte and Außenseiter: Moderne Dynamiken

Stefanie Ernst, 'Geschlechterverhältnisse und Führungspositionen: Zivilisationsgeschichtliche Überlegungen'

Paula-Irene Villa, 'Die Frau als Nomadin oder Mapping the Self: Zur Verwendung von Migrationsmetaphern in der feministischen Theorie'

Jens S. Dangschat, 'Integration – Eine Figuration voller Probleme: Warum die Integration von Migranten/innen so schwierig ist.'

III Global und regional: Modelle politischer Gestaltung

Hartmut Großhans, 'Partizipation in der Wohnungswirtschaft: Aus einem Rechenschaftsbericht für Hermann Korte'

Rolf G. Heinze, 'Regionale Modernisierungspolitik: Optionen und Grenzen'

Reinhart Blomert, "'Als Madeleine

Albright einmal erlebte"', oder: Ist eine Veränderung der Aufgaben eines globalen Zentralinstituts notwendig?'

Bernhard Schäfers, 'Zur Erinnerung an den Dritten Weg: Anlässe und Inhalte gesellschaftlicher Planung im 20. Jahrhundert'

Franziska Bollerey und Kristiana Hartmann, 'Über der Erde, unter der Erde: Wie und wo begegnet die Gesellschaft dem Tod?'

IV Ich- und Wir-Balancen: Biographien soziologisch gesehen

Dirk Käsler, "'Wenn kalte Skeletthände nach dem warmen Leben greifen": Zur Programmatik einer Soziologie historischer Biographieforschung'

René Reinshagen und Wolfhard Schwartz, 'Berufung und Zufall oder: Von der Ungleichzeitigkeit sozialer Existenz'

Jörg Ruhloff, 'Omaggio Hermann Anders Korte'

The *Festschrift* concludes with a full bibliography of Hermann Korte's writings.

SJM



Johan Goudsblom and Nico Wilterdink, eds, *Sociale evolutie: Het evolutieperspectief in de sociologie*. Groningen: Wolters-Noordhoff, 2000. 229 pp. ISBN: 90-01-03372-5

This book is also volume 27, double issue number 1–2 of the *Amsterdams Sociologisch Tijdschrift*. It contains essays on many aspects of the evolutionary perspective in the social sciences, by the editors and by Johan M.G. van de Dennen, Joanna Swabe, Bart van Heerikhuizen, Bert Theunissen, Cor Hermans, Randall Collins, and Jelle Visser. The essays by Joanna Swabe ('Human Social Evolution and Animal Exploitation through Artificial Selection') and by Randall Collins ('The Multidimensionality of Social Evolution and the Historical Pathways of Asia and the West') are in English, the rest in Dutch.

SJM



Lutz Rosemann, 'Zur editorischen Rekonstruktion gestörter Textchronologien

bei Norbert Elias', *Editio* 13, 1999: 173–89.

Norbert Elias's publications have not until now permitted a genetic understanding of the development of his work, because the editions do not take into consideration the extent of the material now lodged in the Deutsche Literaturarchiv at Marbach. A comparison of the material in the archive and the published texts, undertaken while the author held the Norbert Elias Foundation's Marbach Bursary, shows that the texts published in Elias's lifetime were edited under conditions which introduced corruptions and inconsistent emendations on the part of the editors. The article describes and analyses these difficulties by taking the example of the texts of *Über die Zeit* and *Time: An Essay* – the main part of which Elias wrote originally in English, and then added material written in German. The author suggests a way of coming to a reliable text.



Natan Sznajder, 'Compassion and Cruelty in Modern Society: the Case of the Holocaust'. *Amsterdams Sociologisch Tijdschrift*, 26 (4) 1999: 487–506. [Article in English.]

This article explores the possibility of a sociology of the Holocaust. Attempts have been made, especially by Daniel Goldhagen and Zygmunt Bauman, but have not been followed up. The article focuses on compassion. The idea that the sight of suffering imposes a duty to ameliorate it seems a very old notion but is in fact a very recent one. The duty that once bound saints is now considered incumbent on all reasonable people. Yet ideas and feelings change over time. Before the nineteenth century, suffering was hardly considered an evil, in fact guardians of morality paraded the spectacular suffering of evil-doers before the public as a means of improvement.

Sznajder defines compassion as the organised campaign to lessen the suffering of strangers as a distinctly modern form of morality. It played an historically important role in the rise of modern society, and it continues to be important today. A better understanding of the nature of compassion and its connection to social structure allows us to explain many social movements today, movements that otherwise seem accidental, unprecedented and post-modern.

The biggest threat to this view of compassion is the Holocaust, which can also be seen as the breakdown of compassion. The Nazi attempt to destroy European Jewry serves as the limiting case for the argument that modernity fosters the growth of compassion. Is it possible to consider the Holocaust as a German historical phenomenon, not as the result of the production of moral indifference, but just the opposite, the production of closeness which allowed for exceptional cruelty? The article examines this problem in the light of Elias's theories (especially his views on the tensions between a bourgeois merchant ethic and an aristocratic warrior ethic in Germany). Moreover, by means of Goldhagen's study on the Holocaust, the article shows that the breakdown of compassion should not be equated with indifference.

Peter Neville, 'Norbert Elias: Civilisation and Decivilisation', *Social Science Teacher: The Journal of the Association for the Teaching of the Social Sciences*, 29 (2) 2000: 10–12.

Peter Neville, now retired from his post as a further education lecturer, offers some personal – and possibly contentious – comments on the work of Norbert Elias, who hitherto has been neglected in the teaching of sociology in schools. He argues that Elias's work constitutes a new paradigm which, he hopes will gain a higher profile in future 'A'-level courses in Britain.

Robert van Krieken, 'The barbarism of civilisation: cultural genocide and the "stolen generations"', *British Journal of Sociology*, 50 (2) 1999: 297–315

Abstract: Norbert Elias suggested that 'civilisation' involves the transformation of human habitus so that violence of all sorts is gradually subjected to greater and more sophisticated forms of management and control, whereas 'decivilisation' encompasses processes which produce an increase in violence and a breakdown in the stability and consistency of on-going social relations. What remains unexplored is the extent to which 'civilising offensives', the self-conscious attempts to bring about 'civilisation',

have revolved around essentially violent policies and practices. This paper examines the systematic removal of indigenous Australian children from their families, largely for the social engineering purpose of the gradual and systematic annihilation of Aboriginal cultural identity. At the time, these policies and practices were constructed by most observers as contributing to the 'welfare' of Australian Aborigines, and this intersection of welfare and violence raises the possibility that civilisation and decivilisation, rather than being different processes which may or may not run alongside each other, interpenetrate each other so that, under certain circumstances, societies are 'barbaric' precisely in their movement to wards increasing civilisation. It may also be possible to describe the move away from the systematic removal of Aboriginal children since the 1970s as itself part of a civilising process, an increasing recognition of the human rights of Australian Aborigines and of the inhumanity of those policies and practices. The paper concludes by addressing the implications for theories of civilisation and decivilisation, as well as more generally for our contemporary understanding of what it means to be a 'civilised' modern citizen.

Tim Newton, 'Power, subjectivity and British industrial and organisational sociology: the relevance of the work of Norbert Elias', *Sociology – the Journal of the British Sociological Association*, 33 (2) 1999: 411–40

Abstract: This paper links the ideas of Norbert Elias to the conceptualisation of power and subjectivity that has developed in British industrial and organisational sociology. It examines the relevance of power and subjectivity to British industrial and organisational sociology and reviews theoretical positions that have influenced this field. Elias's work is examined in some detail, exploring his approach to power, agency, the self, individualisation and discourse. His work is then applied to a re-examination of the perspectives on power and subjectivity contained within labour process, Foucauldian and actor network theory. The paper attempts to show how Elias's work re-frames our understanding of power and subjectivity through a stress on interdependencies and their asymmetry, the 'networked' nature of agency, and the

interwoven form of human and socio-political development. It argues that Eliasian analysis maintains the critical concern with power asymmetries witnessed in labour process theory, yet avoids some of the difficulties in conceptualisation of power and subjectivity that are apparent in labour process, Foucauldian work and actor network theory. Elias's work also illustrates the need for a lengthier historical perspective than is typically observed in industrial and organisational sociology, and points to the value of studies which look beyond the context of the workplace. Finally, attention is paid to some of the limitations of Elias's work.

Vadim Volkov, 'Violent Entrepreneurship in Post-Communist Russia', *Europe-Asia Studies*, 51 (5) 1999: 741–54.

This highly topical essay ends by setting a very contemporary problem in the context of Elias's treatment of long-term state-formation processes.

Axel van den Berg, 'A note on rational choice theory, historical sociology and the *ceteris paribus* assumption', *Netherlands Journal of Social Sciences*, 35 (2) 1999: 165–73.

Abstract: Abram de Swaan has criticised rational choice theory as ahistoric because of its unavoidable dependence on strong *ceteris paribus* assumptions. This article tries to show that de Swaan is wrong on several counts. First, all explanations, including the historical ones praised by de Swaan for their processual approach, unavoidably depend quite heavily on *ceteris paribus* clauses of all kinds. Second, there is no *a priori* reason for accepting de Swaan's claim that rational choice theory is any less capable of explaining historical processes than any other theory. These two points are illustrated with examples from the work of Norbert Elias who, for de Swaan and others, epitomises the alternative historical approach.

Abram de Swaan, 'A rejoinder to Axel Van den Berg's "note on rational choice

theory, historical sociology and the *Ceteris paribus* assumption”, *Netherlands Journal of Social Sciences*, 35 (2) 1999: 174–6.



Ivan Waddington, *Sport, Health and Drugs – A Critical Sociological Perspective*. London: Taylor and Francis, 2000. 214PP. ISBN: 0–419–25200–2 (pb)

Ivan Waddington's book is a timely and critical contribution to the ongoing debates about sport, health and drugs. It is an insightful combination of empirical and theoretical material that questions the assumption that sport is good for one's health. Waddington, drawing on Elias and Dunning's categorisation of sport and leisure in the spare-time spectrum, highlights the need to differentiate between exercise, sport and the different types and levels of sport. He also offers an alternative, sociological and 'relatively detached' understanding of the emotive subjects of 'cheating', child abuse, problems in the role of the medical practitioner in an athlete's 'health' and well-being (whether individual or club athlete) and the use of performance enhancing drugs in sport. Perhaps the most important contribution of his work is to place ongoing processes in the sporting sphere within the broader social context. Using an implicit figurational approach, we see that the 'medicalisation', commercialisation and politicisation of the sporting sphere are interdependent with the 'medicalisation', politicisation and industrialisation of social life. Within these processes, the increased importance of, and rewards associated with, winning have significant health costs – an increase in stress and overuse injuries and increased constraints on athletes to continue competing while injured. Our bodies come to signify not merely our health status but the embodiment of moral propriety or laxity where an ideology of healthism and victim blaming emerge in contexts such as the use of performance enhancing drugs (which is the focus of the second half of the book).

In a critical evaluation of the topic of performance enhancing drugs to date, Waddington argues that existing anti-drug or doping policies based on a punitive 'law and order' approach have failed in their attempts to prevent the use of performance enhancing drugs. In fact, Waddington places drug taking into an historical perspective, showing us that the 'morality of

drug taking in sport' is a relatively new perspective which regards the use of performance enhancing substances as illegitimate. The recent emergence of a ban and anti-doping policies can be best understood in terms of changing practices within the broader structures of sport and society as a whole where the word 'drug' has come to have a variety of negative connotations which have little to do directly with 'sport'. Similarly, 'cheating' and 'fair play' are relatively modern concepts that developed in a broader pattern of social relationships, what Norbert Elias calls 'sportisation'. Therefore any explanation of the ban on performance-enhancing drugs based on 'fair play' is only partial where other actions (such as altitude training) constitute an attempt to gain an unfair advantage over one's opponent but do not evoke the same emotional response.


Waddington continues by questioning the 'substance availability hypothesis' explanation of drug taking advocated by Coakley and Hughes. This hypothesis argues that athletes at all times in history have placed equal importance on winning and therefore have been prepared to do anything in order to win, including the use of performance enhancing drugs. Waddington argues that this is a form of technological determinism, which offers an inadequate analysis of the complexity of drug-taking across many sporting disciplines, and of the broader social constraints under which athletes operate.

He also combines critical sociological analysis with an evaluation of the ideology and practice of existing policies around sport, specifically anti-drug policy. The conventional approach to understanding the relationship between sport and health is based on a confusion between physical exercise, physical activity and competitive sport. In turn, policies for the development of sport (including anti-drug policies) are often characterised by a confusion in relation to policy goals. He highlights the need to define more distinctly the objectives of anti-doping policy, the need to specify exactly the criteria for monitoring the success of policy, and the need to harmonise anti-doping policy internationally and sport-by-sport. The success of harm reduction policies (such as those now in operation in cycling, e.g. testing for haematocrit levels, categorised as a health issue) are based on three points: that the policies and tests have been accepted as legitimate by those at whom tests are targeted; that they

are constitutive of a non punitive health framework and, that harm reduction policies provide only one part of a differentiated policy in relation to the use of drugs in sport. He concludes by reiterating that there is no ideal solution and wonders whether reality dictates that we accept the 'least bad of an array of very bad options', in this case harm reduction policies.

On a personal level, I found myself re-evaluating my own experiences as a national and international athlete, placing particular instances of sporting and medical advice within a broader framework of understanding. As a student of sport and sociology and life, I would strongly recommend Waddington's work to students of sociology, social policy and social science; to lecturers, researchers and sociologists with an interest in health and sport; and to sports practitioners, administrators, athletes and those involved in the formation of policy. In my opinion, he succeeds in his attempt to provide a 'relatively detached analysis' of emotive and morally powerful topics, and he raises more questions than we have dared address to date.

Katie Liston
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University College Dublin



Derval Howley, *An Outstretched Hand – A Sociological Insight into Street Begging in Dublin City*. Unpublished PhD thesis, University College Dublin, 2000.

The author seeks to provide an in-depth account of the life experiences of people who beg on the streets of Dublin. She focuses in particular on homeless Irish street beggars, beggars from the traveller community, and traveller beggars who have diminished bonds with their community. She examines interactions among beggars on the street with each other, with passers-by, and with the forces of law. An important part of the information was gathered through the author's own participation in begging. A variety of theoretical perspectives is brought to bear on the material, including the concepts of established–outsider relations and of decivilising processes.



John Pratt, 'Norbert Elias and the civilised prison', *British Journal of Sociology*, 50 (2)

Abstract: This paper employs an Eliasian perspective to provide an historical overview to the contemporary crisis in British prisons. It argues that some of the roots of this crisis lie within the very attempts to bring prison development in line with the cultural values of modern society.

Artur Bogner, 'The 1994 civil war in northern Ghana: the genesis and escalation of a "tribal" conflict'. Pp. 183–203 in: Carola Lentz, Paul Nugent eds., *Ethnicity in Ghana: The Limits of Invention*. Basingstoke: Macmillan and St. Martin's Press.

The text is a translated and revised version of an earlier essay in German, 'Der Bürgerkrieg in Nordghana 1994', *Afrika Spectrum* 31 (2) 1996: 161–83. This is a summary by the author:

The Oti basin at the border of Ghana and Togo has been the site of five warlike ethnic conflicts from 1981 to 1994. Members of the Konkomba, a formerly 'chiefless' or acephalous group, were the major actors in these conflicts. The essay offers a hitherto missing historical reconstruction of the process of escalation over the period and especially of the immediate

lead-up to and circumstances of the 1994 war. Local explanations emphasize either the purportedly 'warlike' habitus of the Konkomba or their domination by the chiefs of neighbouring ethnic groups, the four so-called 'majority tribes', with strong elements of discrimination. (The Konkomba, one of the oldest settlement groups in northern Ghana, have often been stigmatized as 'immigrants from Togo'.) In the second local explanation, the conflicts are usually understood as conflicts over land rights. Both explanations are partly confirmed, but neither is sufficient when it comes to explaining the specific violence of the escalation itself, and especially the large-scale escalation of fighting in 1994. In this respect other, or more specific, elements of the whole setting deserve attention, including the historical differences in the political cultures of the ethnic groups involved, and the inefficiency and low legitimacy of the security forces in a poor and neglected border area. A significant and probably indispensable condition for the escalation into a civil war was the ineffi-

ciency and 'corruption' of the state security agencies.

Jurandir Malerba, 'Entre la sociologia y la historia: Pensar la sociologia figurativa en el contexto de la America portuguesa'. (Between Sociology and History: Thinking Figurational Sociology in the context of Portuguese America) *Revista Mexicana de Sociologia* (2/99)

Michael Schröter, 'Psychoanalyse emigriert: Zu den Rundbriefen von Otto Fenichel (mit einem Exkurs: 'Fenichel und Norbert Elias')'. *Psyche*, November 2000.

The German journal *Psyche* published a review-essay by Michael Schröter on *Otto Fenichel: 119 Rundbriefe (1934–1945)*, ed. J. Reichmayr & E. Mühlleitner, 2 vols. (Frankfurt a. M.: Stroemfeld Verlag), containing an excursus on *Fenichel und Norbert Elias*. It reports how Fenichel, one of the leading 'left' Freudians of his time, hailed the first volume of *Über den Prozeß der Zivilisation* in 1938–39 as a paragon of 'psychoanalytical sociology'. Upon requesting his London friends for more information, he learned that Elias was a 'thorough scholar' with 'subtle psychological flair', 'very clever (although not quite as clever as he thinks himself to be)', 'ardently wishing to co-operate with psychoanalysts'. This wish was confirmed by Elias in a letter to Fenichel where he mentioned his current research on the masturbation taboo and his plans for a journey to the USA. There was an exchange of four letters between the two men. Schröter's essay shows how important were the efforts at integrating psychoanalysis and sociology, of which Fenichel was a champion, as a context in which *Über den Prozeß* was written. In 1978 Elias composed an (unpublished) article, *Notizen zu einem Brief*, as a kind of belated answer to Fenichel's last letter to him, dated October 9, 1939 (cf. Schröter's book *Erfahrungen mit Norbert Elias*, p. 278ff).

David Gentilcore, 'Figurations and State Authority in Early Modern Italy'. *Canadian Journal of History*, 34, 1999: 359–83. Abstract: In 1559 Siena became part of the Tuscan Grand Duchy, but it retained its own institutional, administrative, and legal structures, and this included the College of

Doctors of Philosophy and Medicine. Responsible for granting degrees, the college acquired the authority to examine, approve and license all those practising, or wishing to practise, the 'healing arts'. It also assumed the right to try offences such as non-payment for treatment and unlicensed or illicit medical practice. These functions were all exercised by a special magistracy set up within the college, known as the Protomedico. The analysis of the Protomedico's licensing and judicial functions over some 250 years, involving a wide range of practitioners and patients, is offered as a test-case of the ideas of the sociologist-historian Norbert Elias about figurations. Elias proposed the construction of 'figurations models' as a way of investigating the scope for action and the interdependence of individuals and groups within changing social structures. The Siense Protomedico's deliberations and decisions were the result of an ongoing process of negotiation, where each group or individual involved sought to manipulate the system to its own advantage. Such practices, formal and informal, were accepted means of negotiating authority, power, and obligations in the early modern state. In this figuration the state is best seen as 'process', in which power does not necessarily gravitate towards the centre, but may lie in relations between different levels of society.

Hanneman Samuel, *The Development of Sociology in Indonesia: The Production of Knowledge, State-Formation and Economic Change*. Unpublished PhD thesis, Swinburne University of Technology, Melbourne, Australia, 2000.

This study in the sociology of sociology is interesting and important in at least three respects. First, the author examines Elias's sociological theory of the sciences in relation to some more recent (and generally more relativistic) approaches, such as those of Karen Knorr-Cetina, Steve Woolgar and Harry Collins, and more discourse analysis. Secondly, he relates the development of the social sciences to processes of state formation and the emergence of relatively autonomous scientific communities. And thirdly, he presents a study of the development of the social sciences in a non-Western context – specifically that of his native country of Indonesia, where the character of the regime in recent decades has left a marked

imprint on sociology.



Guy Oakes and Arthur J. Vidich, *Collaboration, Reputation and Ethics in American Academic Life: Hans H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills*. Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press. 288 pp. £54.00 (hb), £13.99 (pb) ISBN: 0-252-02484-2.

Hans Gerth and Charles Wright Mills had an important impact on American sociology in the post-war years, notably through their book *From Max Weber* (still very much in print) and *Character and Social Structure*. This study of their collaboration and respective careers will be of interest to many readers of *Figurations* for what it depicts of an important phase in the history of modern sociology, as a study in how and how not to succeed in American academic life, and because in the early 1930s Hans Gerth was assistant to Karl Mannheim jointly with Norbert Elias. (Elias used to reminisce about the day when Mannheim called him in to say that he was cutting his pay in half in order to share it with Gerth.)

Zygmunt Bauman, reviewing this book in the *Times Literary Supplement*, 7 July 2000, noted that Gerth and Mills's two books 'played a virtually unequalled role, breaking as they did the social-scientific Establishment's long isolation from the European *Kulturwissenschaften* tradition'. To summarise the story of their partnership, I can best quote a paragraph from Bauman's review:

'Hans Gerth had decided to leave Germany after a few years of lukewarm and, in the end, ineffective attempts to co-operate with the Nazi regime. Arriving in America several years later than most academic refugees, he was greeted by his former colleagues not only without enthusiasm but with a good deal of suspicion. In the German intellectual colony there was no room for the author of Elisabeth Förster Nietzsche's obituary and articles such as 'The Führer relaxes watching old art films' or 'Are the Japanese a race?'. Gerth found the search for a university place a daunting task; as his attempts kept failing, so his caginess and jaundice kept swelling. He was trained in the German solid (and stolid) learned tradition and had emerged unscathed by a sense of humour. In the American provincial university in which he finally

landed, he met students who, though deeply impressed by his weekly displays of dazzling erudition, lost track after a few sentences and left the lecture hall without taking a single note. And then he found (or, more to the point, was found by) Wright Mills, a PhD student with little grounding in German (or any other) philosophy, and of the limited learning of the kind offered by courses taught outside the Ivy League schools, but who nevertheless had an uncanny intelligence and unlimited voracity for knowledge. And so the drama began. The marriage between the two unlikely partners was made in heaven, but the Devil must have been the best man at the wedding'.

SJM



Herman Tak, *South Italian Festivals: A Local History of Ritual and Change*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2000. 272 pp. ISBN: 90-5356-426-8. STG £16.95.

Herman Tak has previously featured in these pages as the organiser, with Don Kalb, of the conference in Wrocław during which a commemorative plaque was unveiled at the childhood home of Norbert Elias (see *Figurations* 12). His new book was in fact completed some time before then, and Elias is mentioned only fleetingly in it. But the figurational or processual approach is prominent in it, even if the name of Elias is not. The flavour is conveyed in the following brief excerpts from the conclusion (p. 247):

'The intention of this study has been to elucidate processes of ritual continuity and change, within a particular cultural setting in an historical South Italian landscape. I have tried to show the dialectics between local production, reproduction and reworking of rituals, and the structures of power underlying interplays between internal and external forces, and governing socio-economic relations. Structures of power are fundamental for understanding processes of political economy to which culture is closely connected yet without being reducible to them. ...

Time – i.e. the exploration of sequences of patterned interplays of economic, social, and cultural formations – is a major weakness of anthropological approaches which

analyse ritual from a structuralist perspective. Structuralism places man [sic] correctly in a web of relations but incorrectly assumes that this web of relations (structures) has a stable centre, in this case the ritual content which is held to linger on endlessly. If ritual content is reduced to what structuralists believe to be its core, i.e. the oppositions in ritual transitions (summer–winter; life–death; youth–adulthood) or exclusive ritual movements (annual transport of an image from one place to another and back), then it is obvious that even in the long run the content of ritual does not change. The analytical power of such a perspective, however, is poor since synchronic reading ignores the problem of the erosion and change of rituals. Conceptions of ritual as 'enclosed in itself and concentrated on itself' (Staal) and driven by 'perpetual motion' (Handelman) have a close metaphorical resemblance with Dostoyevki's beheaded holy man who walked round with his head in his hands while kissing it.'

SJM

■ AUTHORS' ANNOUNCEMENTS

Leske & Budrich have recently published both Helmut Kuzmics and Roland Axtmann's book on national character in Austria and England, and a volume of selected papers from the Norbert Elias centenary conference held in Bielefeld in 1997. Details are:

Helmut Kuzmics and Roland Axtmann, *Autorität, Staat und Nationalcharakter: Der Zivilisationsprozess in Oesterreich und England 1700–1900*, Opladen: Leske & Budrich, 2000, 427 pp., DM 55.00

Annette Treibel, Helmut Kuzmics and Reinhard Blomert, eds, *Zivilisationstheorie in der Bilanz. Beiträge zum 100. Geburtstag von Norbert Elias (1897–1900)*, Leske & Budrich, Opladen, 2000.

Reviews of the above books will appear in *Figurations* 15.

Sebastian Rinken, *The AIDS Crisis and the Modern Self. Biographical Self-Construction in the Awareness of Finitude*. Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers. ISBN: 0-7923-6371-X

Sebastian Rinken, formerly a PhD student

of Arpad Szokolczai's at the EUI, Florence, and now teaching at the LSE, has written a study of the AIDS crisis inspired mainly by Foucault but to a lesser extent by Elias's ideas too.

In industrialized countries, HIV/AIDS is now increasingly perceived as a chronic condition. Yet initially, before combination therapy became available, this pandemic was widely associated with premature or even imminent death. Receiving the diagnosis typically led to a dramatic biographical disruption.

This book turns this basic feature of life with HIV into the vantage point for a fascinating analysis of contemporary Western subjectivity. Combining a host of empirical observations with the debate on the modern self, the author argues that constructing one's biography in terms of self-actualization is in fact a manifestation of nihilism: it evokes a standard of certainty which, on closer examination, cannot be sustained.

RECENT CONFERENCES

Norbert Elias and Anthropology / Norbert Elias et l'ethnologie
Colloque du Société d'ethnologie française; Université de Metz
21–23 September 2000

In France, anthropologists have recently discovered or rediscovered Elias's work as a source of inspiration in ethnography. The conference in Metz, very effectively organised by Sophie Chevalier and Jean-Marie Privat, served as an opportunity both to look back at debates of former years and to develop questions for the future. It gathered together researchers from three generations, various disciplines and many countries, and thus reflected the interdisciplinary, international and processual character of Elias's thinking. Although the majority of participants were still drawn from the Western European academic community, there was a small but significant admixture of researchers from Latvia, the USA, and Latin America.

The conference opened with Jack Goody's account of the hindrances for anthropology in taking up Elias's ideas, reiterating the charges of Eurocentrism and evolutionism.

Professor Goody had met Elias in Ghana in 1962–64, and was plainly sceptical about Elias, as a sociologist, parachuting in as a sociologist with no previous experience of Ghanaian society, thitherto the preserve of anthropologists who spent long periods in the field. Stephen Mennell, acknowledging that many of the most vocal criticisms of Elias's theories had in the past come from anthropologists, responded with a critique



Sophie Chevalier

of aspects of the anthropological orthodoxy from an Eliasian standpoint. In a paper entitled 'Anthropologists and Developmental Agnosticism' – a term used by K. A. Wittfogel to designate the once-prevalent



Jean-Marie Privat

nervousness about developmental theories – Mennell criticised the view common among anthropologists such as Mary Douglas that avoidances and feelings of repugnance are random and without developmental pattern, and the work of Hans-Peter Duerr in his multi-volume *Der Mythos vom Zivilisationsprozess*. Later in the conference, Eric Dunning linked a critique of British anthropology to his interests in violence, hooliganism, race relations, and genocide. He also discussed how, in his teaching at Leicester, Elias anticipated

Horowitz's ideas of the 'three worlds of development', and how he would have applied this in his teaching in Ghana.

Other talks offered critical but positive assessments of Elias's contribution to anthropology. André Bourguière stressed the importance of Elias's pointing to the historicity of what were sometimes considered 'timeless realities', taking the example of the history of birth control, while at the same time presenting a view of history as a sequence of movements and counter-movements. Anton Blok listed other fruitful perspectives: the micro–macro link supplied by Elias, his ideas on monopolies of violence, the dynamic conceptualisation of social processes. Wolfgang Kaschuba discussed the relevance of Elias's sociology of knowledge to anthropology: Elias points out that knowledge and thus science and society are interdependent and that self-reflexivity is essential to European scientific thinking. Artur Bogner, once one of Elias's student assistants, spoke as a sociologist who has become a Ghana specialist. Through his study of ethnic conflicts in northern Ghana, he emphasised the importance of supplementing the theory of civilising processes with the established–outsiders theory for an adequate understanding of such conflicts, and in order to prevent the former becoming ethnocentric. Jeroen Duindam discussed research on the historical ethnography of courtly life since Elias wrote *The Court Society*, and argued that Elias overstates the role of state formation in civilising processes.

Johan Goudsblom's talk aimed at fitting Elias's concept of 'civilising process' into a general theory of anthropology and human history. Concentrating on the ideas of differentiation and the principle of interweaving, Goudsblom sketched a systematisation of Elias's 'concentric deconstruction of civilisation' and thus broadened the possibilities for applying the approach. Hermann Korte, who described Elias's *regard ethnologique* as an essential feature of his work and character, followed another line of argument, quoting a *haiku* by Elias:

How strange these people are
How strange I am
How strange we are

Korte also described Elias's experiments in the style of Garfinkel, telling the amusing story of how Elias walked around with his shoelaces undone, testing the reactions of

people in various countries and finding that their way of pointing out the danger to him varied according to nationality.

Whereas the discussions first focused mainly on the theory of civilising processes and on the topics of evolutionism and Eurocentrism raised in the debates of the 1970s, the topics gradually shifted to show the varied facets of Elias's work, the further development of his theory by others, and the variety of ways in which it could be critically applied in various disciplines. Jean-Yves Trepos took up De Swaan's ideas on proto-professionalisation in analysing the interdependence of drug users and psychiatrists in the French system, where people arrested for possession of cannabis or heroin can be committed into therapy. Sophie Chevalier, in her research on the reconstruction of the public sphere in the private sphere took up the comparative-historical method, employing the concepts of we- and I-identities. Pablo Jauregui explored the themes of collective identification in Elias's work through his own research on the contrasting importance of Europe and membership of the EU in the formation of national identities in Britain and Spain. Freddy Raphael and Geneviève Herberich-Marx presentation focused on *The Germans* and the Shoah – a paper which led Eric Dunning to claim that they had delivered the paper he planned to give ('very good it was too', he observed), with the result that next morning he improvised the paper already mentioned above. Jean-Hugues Dechaux critically assessed Elias's *The Loneliness of the Dying*. Elisabeth Timm described her investigation of how far the attitudes described by Elias in his discussion of *Zivilisation* and *Kultur* are still detectable among German people today, giving her interpretation of these findings, based on the writings of Richard Sennett and others, as a strategy of distinction of petit-bourgeois groups against the lower strata. Jean-Marc Leveratto used ideas about leisure from *Quest for Excitement* to analyse theatre. Elias's concepts were also applied in analysing topics as varied as the construction of cultural identity in Puritan New England (Paul Neubauer), the importance of local autonomy in north-western Spain (David Guilet), theatre and society in pre-independence Brazil (Jurandir Malerba), and the development of charismatic communities in Latvia (Agita Luse). Robert Maier spoke about the stimulus to his work on migrant populations provided by Elias's theories and methodology.

Angela Perruli, in her case study on the consequences of a new railway line in northern Italy, stressed the processuality of both social change and research on social change. Jean-Paul Callède spoke about sports in the context of political anthropology. To add to the variety of topics, Jean-Marie Privat compared Elias and Bakhtine.

On the first evening, a very interesting round table session tackled the question of education. Marceline Laparra completely dismissed Elias's value in the study of education; but Deborah Reed-Dunahay showed how he could be applied in a critical ethnography of schooling, both through defining the schooling process as a civilising process and through analysing power relations between teachers, pupils and parents. For Norman Gabriel, the intertwining of biological and social learning processes stressed by Elias in his later writings was a central idea for understanding learning processes in children. Numa Murard, though including love as an important aspect, emphasised a point often criticised in Elias: the importance of fear for education. Eric Prairat discussed socialisation in schools and the internalisation of discipline, comparing Foucault and Elias, pointing out that while Foucault is critical of these processes Elias takes a more positive view.

In her parting remarks, Nathalie Heinich observed that the conference had not concentrated on the big controversial issues of yesteryear – the charge of Eurocentrism and so on – and she sounded disappointed that it had not. On the other hand, it might be thought more refreshing that, instead, most of the papers represented 'normal science', applying and developing and testing aspects of Elias's thinking in new ethnographic contexts. One of the best features of this stimulating conference was that the participants included many PhD students and junior academics as well as more established figures. It is hoped that a book may be produced from the papers presented in Metz.

Heike Hammer
University of Hamburg

Colloque International Norbert Elias Université de Haute Bretagne – Rennes II 13–14 October 2000

The Conference was organised by the Centre d'Etudes et de Recherches sur les pratiques et politiques éducatives (Rennes II) and the Centre de Recherches Administratives et Politiques (CRAP – sic!) de CNRS/IEP. In particular, the organisers were Erik Neveu, Yves Bonny and Jean-Manuel de Queiroz.

The conference opened with three plenary lectures, by members of the Norbert Elias flying circus, Stephen Mennell (University College Dublin) 'Étude comparée des processus de civilisation et de décivilisation', Eric Dunning (Leicester University) 'Nazism and the Civilising Process' and Cas Wouters (Université d'Utrecht) 'Civilised Manners: From Disciplining to Informalising' which in affect discussed three principal criticisms of Elias's Civilising Process which have been raised over many years: whether the theory is inherently eurocentric, whether it was irretrievably refuted by the Nazi genocides and whether the process did or did not go into reverse in the emergence of a (more) 'permissive' society and informalisation in the twentieth century. The closing plenary lectures were by Abram de Swaan and Bernard Lacroix. In between there were plenary lectures more orientated to aspects of Elias's life: by David Rotman (Paris X) on the sojourn on the Isle of Man, Jacques Cochin speculating on the impact of the Ghana adventure, and



Søren Nagbøl

Søren Nagbøl on Elias's return to Frankfurt in 1978. There was also an exhibition of Nagbøl's photographs from that era. The main business of the colloquium was

however conducted in parallel workshops in which a large number of high quality reports were presented of research in progress in a very diverse array of fields.

One notable feature of the conference was the relative prominence of questions relating to the educational process. It is strange that, although the relevance of Elias's writings to education is very obvious, the first generation of Eliasian researchers produced few if any sociologists of education. Equally notable is the very strong impact in France currently of Elias's ideas in the field of political science; one is also struck by the unusual breadth of interests shown by French Eliasian political scientists – bursting the boundaries of what might elsewhere be regarded as the proper territory of political science. Bravo! Finally, as in Metz, it was striking how many young researchers – new faces – participated.

One final impression: although British social sciences have been heavily contaminated by 'French theory', paradoxically the social sciences in France itself have remained to a greater extent immune. This impression was confirmed by our hosts in Rennes.

SJM

■ ON VIDEO

Norbert Elias lecture on 'Sex and Civilization' on video

During the conference in Metz on 'Norbert Elias and Social Anthropology' many people showed interest in the videotapes of Norbert Elias. The videotaped lecture on 'Sex and Civilization' can be ordered and used for educational purposes. Needless to say, copying is not allowed. To order the VHS videotape, entitled 'Sex en beschaving', please write to Trimbos-Instituut, Film- en videotheek, Postbus 725, 3500 AS Utrecht, The Netherlands, specifying both the title and its article code, KVID 0521. Price in the Netherlands: Euro 33.75. Do not delay your order. The Institute might close its services to the general public on 1 January 2001, though this is not certain as yet.

■ FORTHCOMING CONFERENCES

XVI World Congress of Sociology, Brisbane, Australia 8–12 July 2002 Comparative Historical Sociology of Empires

Proposal for an Ad Hoc Session (two time-slots) on the comparative historical sociology of empires at the World Congress of Sociology, Brisbane, July 2002:

The problematic of imperial formations is a strikingly underdeveloped area of historical sociology. Since the publication of S. N. Eisenstadt's *Political Systems of Empires* 1963, there has been no large-scale comparative survey of the field. Historians and sociologists have, however, produced a large body of work on specific cases; much less has been done to link the results to new developments in social theory.

The workshop to be organized in Brisbane would focus on four main topics:

1. the specific problematic of imperial power structures in the context of theories of state formation;
2. the 'developmental' dimension of empires, i.e. the question of their contribution to the growth of social power (raised in Michael Mann's *Sources of Social Power*, vol. 1, but not much discussed since then);
3. the role of empires in early modern history – an issue closely linked to the unfolding debate on 'early modernities';
4. the question of imperial crises and reconstructions in the twentieth century, perhaps with particular reference to the trajectories of Communism in East and West.

Given the specific research interests of those involved in the project, it is likely that there would be a strong emphasis on the historical empires which survived into the twentieth century, especially the Habsburg, Ottoman, Russian and Chinese empires; but other cases would also be taken into account.

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Contributions should preferably be e-mailed to the Editor, or sent on a disk (formatted for PC-DOS, not Apple Macintosh); Microsoft Word, WordPerfect (up to 5.1), Rich Text and plain text files can all be handled. Do not use embedded footnotes. Hard copy is accepted reluctantly.

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