

Figurations

Newsletter of the Norbert Elias Foundation

EDITORS' NOTES

■ Our apologies for the late publication of *Figurations* 15. Cobie Rensen, who for several years handled everything to do with *Figurations*, from its design to maintaining the mailing list, resigned her post at SISWO to take a job nearer home. It was some time before Annette van de Sluis was appointed to replace her. We remember Cobie's work for us with gratitude, wish her well in her new post, and look forward to working with Annette.



Annette



Cobie

■ Verlag Neue Kritik have published a series of postcards depicting 'Critical Thinkers of an Epoch'. One of them shows Elias at work in Leicester around 1976. The photograph was taken by Hermann Korte (and Elias's sweater was knitted by Barbara Menell!).

■ *Figurations* has made its mark as something to be cited! In the *Reader's Guide to the Social Sciences*, vol. 2 (Chicago: Fitzroy, Dearborn, 2001) p.1519, in a section by Arthur McCullough (University of Ulster) on 'comparative societies and civilisations', readers are informed that 'Trends and events relating to ongoing research on Elias may be followed in *Figurations: Newsletter of the Norbert Elias Foundation*.'

■ Esteban Castro writes that, after teaching in development studies at the LSE last year, he has now moved to the Department of Geography at Oxford, where he is heading a research project on water and sanitation in Latin America and Africa. He is completing a book based on his DPhil thesis, a figurational study of the history of water control in Mexico. He has also been awarded a fellowship to spend 2–3 months in the Piaget Archives in Geneva, where he will work on the interrelations (if any) between Elias's and Piaget's concepts of sociogenesis and psychogenesis.

■ Pablo Jáuregui is now a postdoctoral researcher at the UNED university in Madrid, working on the EURONAT international project, the aim of which is to explore the issue of national identity and European integration in six member states of the EU and six candidate countries.

■ DECIVILISING PROCESSES?

Elias has been repeatedly criticised for presenting civilising processes as steadily moving in one direction. If *The Civilising Process* had been about all societies in all times, this would have been justified. But in his book Elias analysed the development of Western Europe from the late Middle Ages until around 1800, concentrating on France, and making comparisons with England and Germany. In the last chapter he did make an *Entwurf* of a more general theory (translated in the new English edition as 'Towards a theory ...'), which he expanded upon in his later work. But he never laid claim to a general theory of civilising as a unidirectional process

Still, the violent breakdown of civilisation in a number of state-societies in the twentieth century – be it at different levels of civilising, such as in Germany or Cambodia, Yugoslavia or a number of states in Africa – was troublesome for the wider perspective Elias had developed. The emergence of the Nazi regime in Germany, a Western European country with a high level of civilising on the face of it, was used by critics to dismiss the idea of a civilising process altogether.

This critique has been countered with the argument that civilising processes always go together with decivilising processes which act in a contrary direction to civilising processes, and which in certain conditions can get the upper hand. In Chapter Four of *The Germans*, Elias himself conceptualised the rise of the Hitler regime and the resulting 'breakdown of civilization' in Germany as a 'decivilising spurt', characterized by 'barbarisation' and 'brutalisation' processes. Since in his analysis of civilising processes he uses the term 'spurt' (derived from sport) to denote an acceleration, a quickening of the pace of the process, a decivilising spurt must be seen as an acceleration too. But it may already been noted that Elias was in fact concerned with the dynamic of the 'breakdown of civilisation' in Nazi Germany rather than with that of a long-term decivilising process.¹

The question is whether decivilising processes can indeed be observed which in their structure and dynamic are similar to civilising processes. Can we observe two processes moving in contrary directions? Do decivilising processes follow a relatively autonomous course in a 'backward' direction which, when strong enough, will reverse the civilising process?

This idea of two distinct processes is not consistent with Elias's own analysis of the civilising dynamic. Civilising is based on constraints, at first externally enforced, but increasingly based on internalised, conscience-driven restraints. Internalisation, however, is not an historically given or spontaneous development of personality structures, but the result of family, peer-group and school pressures. External constraints, nonetheless, remain a necessary basis for maintaining civilised conduct, as is demonstrated by the continued role of the police and criminal law in repressing and deterring violent conduct. Constraints will always be resisted, opposed and escaped from. Violent conduct by individuals and groups can be mitigated but not eliminated.

The very dynamic of civilising includes forces countering civilising. The weakening or complete elimination of restraints can lead to a negation or reversal of the civilising process, the more likely the lower its level. Even all-round and stable civilised conduct remains precarious.

Large-scale breakdown of civilisation, however, has never been the outcome of the increasing strength of counter-tendencies in the civilising process itself, though it made these come into the open. Such breakdowns of civilisation have always been the result of a change of political regime at the central state level, replacing civilised restraints and stimulating brutal conduct and terror to establish and consolidate its hegemony and to wage war. In the worst cases of destruction of civilised society (the Nazi and Kampuchean regimes) brutal means of rule were seen by the regime as necessary to purify society and make it survive the centuries. In the states which made the Yugoslav fed-

eration disintegrate, such a thousand-year vision was absent. In Croatia and Serbia, as 'great powers' aiming at each other's defeat, brutalisation and mass murder were justified by competing nationalisms as means of waging war. Civilised conduct was treated as the hypocritical denial of the crucial importance of ethnic ties characteristic of the former Yugoslavia. In Croatia and Serbia the ideal of purity – of ethnic origin – also played a role in justifying decivilising and mass murder.

But in none of these cases can we observe a long-term process moving in the direction of a reversal of the civilising process, comparable to the process leading to the Dark Ages. At the present day, only a global nuclear war would lead to such a decivilising process. Recovery would take a long time.

All the more recent examples of 'decivilising processes' – terrible as they were – have been episodes, lasting a relatively brief period. Was the civilising process in the countries concerned more resilient than it seemed, or is there another explanation?

In the first place, civilising processes are an aspect of the overall development of societies and are conditioned by that development. As the direction of that overall process has remained the same, and has expanded even to the global level, the dynamic of civilising in state societies may have become stronger rather than weaker.

International pressure towards civilising does not occur just on the level now called civil society. The conditions have also been set by governments. After 1945 the vanquished powers Japan and Germany were both forced and helped to become 'normal' – read 'civilised' – societies again. Barbarisation and brutalisation processes were replaced by democratisation as their antidote. Their instigators were treated as criminals, *war* criminals. It was not necessary to start from zero. Civilising standards were revived and expanded. Political reforms enforced by the allied powers made it possible for Germany and Japan to be incorporated into the European and global international frameworks. Germany could reorientate its national

image to the idea of a united Europe, which Japan could not. In the cases of Germany and Japan, their defeat made direct pressure towards re-civilising possible.

The Soviet regime, which in Stalin's time also went far in the direction of organising a breakdown of civilisation by its rule by terror, murder and fear. Nadezhda Mandelstam in her memoirs gives a sharp and vivid description of what this meant. Was the wish for international respectability as important a motive for destalinisation as regaining the loyalty of its own population? Both were unsuccessful. After the Soviet Union fell apart there was for a time a clear wish for Russia to become a Western country, but the requirements of civilising were neglected, because Western economic advisors agreed with Marxism that everything comes out of the economy. Nor was the Soviet Union defeated in war, so the recipes followed in Japan and Germany could not be applied. So Russia has orientated itself again to the role of a great power, though it lacks the resources to follow a fully independent course without being influenced by the global civilising process. China is in a comparable ambiguous situation.

International pressures have become an important obstacle for decivilising tendencies maintaining the upper hand. International and domestic forces combine. People living in countries in which a breakdown of civilisation has occurred – even if the majority has at first for reasons of national pride supported the new barbaric standards – begin, when it fails to bring the promised results, to compare their fate with that of the population of 'normal', civilised states. So then attempts are made to get rid of the 'barbaric' regimes and make their countries acceptable again. Recivilising is helped by the development of international criminal law and institutions such as the Yugoslavian Tribunal, which treats military and political leaders as war criminals and thus eliminates them from the political scene. Such recivilising or normalising occurred both in Croatia and Serbia, the two rival powers most responsible for the atrocities accompanying the disintegration of Yugoslavia.

To make Cambodia a viable state again after the mass murders and terror, the UN even resorted to installing an international provisional government, to be replaced after elections by a national coalition government. Because the Khmer Rouge remained stronger than expected, fighting still continued, so normalisation of the Cambodian state succeeded only partly. Still, the other South East Asian states were reconciled with Vietnam, making continuing pressure on Cambodia possible. But the level of development and civilising in Cambodia before the Khmer Rouge was lower – in the sense of being more dependent on external restraints – than that of Germany before the rise of the Nazi regime. The concept of recivilising therefore had less meaning there.

If a viable state possessing a relatively stable monopoly over the means of violence is a condition for a higher level of civilising (as Elias demonstrated), its opposite, state collapse – 'failed states' – will make decivilising tendencies predominate and brutalise the struggle for control between warlords. A first example may have been Chad, but that state was restored with the support of France and Libya. Attempts by some chiefs/warlords, and by a movement mainly of professional people, to restore the Somali state have failed, probably for lack of international support. Other states such as Congo or Sierra Leone are similarly stuck in a disintegration process accompanied by a breakdown of civilisation. International civilising pressures are weaker in Africa than in Europe. The established states are not prepared to go further than intervening rhetorically and sometimes supporting conflict resolution processes. States in the region are too weak to make a real difference, though governments do emphasise the need for Africa to become a society of viable states.

The above argument suggests that decivilising tendencies and breakdowns of civilisation have been countered and remedied by the globalisation of civilising standards. Deviant states can be reformed by what is now called the 'international community'. Proposed humanitarian intervention by force against governments committing grave and massive violations of human

rights would translate pressure into policy. The violations of human rights demanding and justifying humanitarian intervention – as initiated by organizations like NATO or by 'coalitions of the able and willing' without authorization of the Security Council and without permission of the government concerned – are precisely those associated with a breakdown of civilisation. Humanitarian intervention in this sense is by no means generally accepted, and it raises many practical and political problems. But its now being seriously discussed does throw light on the civilising process at the global level.

The concept of decivilising processes thus proves not to be adequate. Its symptoms are in fact inherent in civilising processes because of the tensions resulting from the different kinds of constraints on which civilising processes are based. They are well expressed in Mishima's characterization of the consequences of civilising: 'the compromise climate of today in which one can neither live beautifully nor die horribly'. There are no recent decivilising processes of as long a duration as civilising processes. The relatively brief character of decivilising episodes appears to be due to the globalisation of civilising standards, and to the international efforts to recivilise societies after a breakdown of civilization has occurred.

Most studies of decivilising processes, including what is still the most comprehensive empirical study by Elias himself in *The Germans*, analyse the dynamics of a breakdown of civilisation rather than a long-term decivilising process on the same footing as a civilising process. It is more adequate to think in terms of the tensions inherent in civilising processes which under certain conditions can lead to collapse, breakdown, disintegration. Decivilising episodes occur within civilising processes. To oppose decivilising to civilising processes is misleading also because it ignores the interconnections between civilising processes at different levels, especially between the global/interstate and the intrastate levels.

Note

1. The recivilising processes in Japan and Germany are still quite different, as Ian Buruma has made clear in his comparative investigation of the role of memories of war in the two countries (*The Wages of Guilt*, New York, 1994).

Godfried van Benthem van den Bergh
Den Haag

Comment

Godfried van Benthem van den Bergh and I have been discussing the problematic notion of decivilising processes together over the last few years, with a view to clarifying our own ideas and then initiating a wider debate. I substantially agree with all of the arguments advanced above, but would add a few points.

My own book *Norbert Elias: Civilisation and the Human Self-Image* (1989, later editions *Norbert Elias: An Introduction*) arose out of the problem of what may most generally be called the ‘reversibility of civilising processes’, although in the end the book was wider in scope than that. Without committing himself in detail to the notion, Elias suggested I use the term ‘decivilising processes’ for such reversals. In chapter 10 of the book, and in related articles, I was concerned to disentangle at least three things:

(1) Informalising processes, already by then much discussed by Cas Wouters, Christien Brinkgreve and others (and later by Elias himself in *The Germans*). It was already broadly agreed that these did not in any simple way represent a ‘reversal’ of the overall Western civilising process.

(2) Genocidal episodes, several of which are mentioned above. As Zygmunt Bauman had pointed out in *Modernity and the Holocaust* (1989), and Horkheimer and Adorno before him, such episodes paradoxically involve (among other things) a high degree of rational foresight and emotional distancing, capacities that Elias showed to be fostered in the course of civilising processes. For these perverse applications of ‘civilised’ skills, Bram de Swaan has more recently coined the term ‘dyscivilisation’. Such episodes,

as Godfried points out, are relatively short in duration, after which things can apparently ‘return to normal’.

(3) What I called ‘true decivilising processes’. I left it an open question whether there were any actual empirical examples that fitted this concept. My background concern here was with the charge that the theory of civilising processes was an instance of outdated theories of *inevitable* and unilinear progress – the butt of Popperian denunciations back in the 1950s and 1960s. Elias was clearly not saying that civilising processes are inevitable and irreversible. Yet, I said, he might appear to be saying that civilising processes take a long time and are fragile, yet decivilising processes (in the sense breakdowns of civilisation) can happen relatively quickly, and thus he could appear to be both having his cake and eating it. I therefore argued that a ‘true’ decivilising process, one that looked like a mirror image of a civilising process, would be one where over *at least three generations* one could observe a tilting of the balance back from *Selbstzwang* towards *Fremdzwang*, the development of *lesser* capacities for habitual foresight, diminished standards of detachment, and perhaps things that were once hidden behind the scenes now being done in full view – and so on. But, as Godfried points out above, it is very difficult to think of empirical instances of this in the modern world. The best contender appears to be Loïc Wacquant’s account (1992) of inter-generational changes in a black ghetto in the USA.

Godfried is in effect suggesting that the possibility of ‘true’ decivilising processes is path-dependent. That is to say, I am sure he is right that the complex chains of interdependence in the modern world make it unlikely that a ‘decivilising’ episode will be of long duration. Could the ‘modern world’ collapse and fulfil the hopes of Bin Laden? On the other hand, we know that at earlier stages of the development of human society there were many instances of large-scale societies collapsing into much smaller-scale local communities, and of regression towards economic and political autarky (see Joseph A. Tainter, *The Collapse of Complex Societies*, 1988). Indeed Elias

devoted the first part of the second volume of *Über den Prozess der Zivilisation* to just such a process, that of feudalisation in Western Europe during and after the collapse of the Roman Empire in the West. As has been noted before, however, Elias did not attempt to trace the changes in manners, feelings and habitus that people underwent in that period: there is a disjuncture between the chronological periods covered by the ‘manners’ and the ‘state-formation’ parts of his book. One possible reason is obvious: the documentary evidence required to assess changes in habitus is likely to be very sparse during such periods of prolonged disintegration.

Significantly, some films and novels set in the aftermath of catastrophic nuclear war have imaginatively depicted very precisely the progressive loss of ‘civilised’ skills and habits. Godfried van Benthem van den Bergh suggests that it would indeed require such a catastrophe to produce a ‘true’ long-term decivilising process in the modern world. As an antidote to slipping back into any assumption of inevitability it is, however, important to bear in mind the possibility of such a catastrophe. And – who knows? – evidence may yet come to light that shows how people experienced, and changed in consequence of, living through extended periods of social collapse in the past.

Stephen Mennell
University College Dublin

Earlier discussions of decivilising processes include:

Bishop K., Elliott M. 1999 ‘Decivilisation and Warrior Regimes.’ *International Minds* 9(2):14-20

Dunning E., Mennell S. 1998 On the Balance between ‘Civilising’ and ‘Decivilising’ Trends in the Social Development of Western Europe: Elias on Germany, Nazism and the Holocaust. *British Journal of Sociology* 49(3):339-357

Elias N. 1996 *The Germans: Power Struggles and the Development of Habitus in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*. Oxford: Polity Press.

Fletcher J. 1995 'Towards a Theory of Decivilising Processes.' *Amsterdams Sociologisch Tijdschrift* 22(2):283-96

Fletcher J. 1997 *Violence and Civilisation: An Introduction to the Work of Norbert Elias*. Oxford: Polity Press.

Mennell S. 1990 'Decivilising Processes: Theoretical Significance and Some Lines for Research.' *International Sociology* 5(2):205-3

Swaan A. de 1999 'Dyscivilatie, massavernietiging en de staat.' *Amsterdams Sociologisch Tijdschrift* 26(3):289-301

Wacquant L. 1992 'Décivilisation et diabolisation: la mutation du ghetto noir américain. In *L'Amérique des français*, ed. Bishop T, Fuure C, Paris: Editions François Bourin.

Zwaan T. 2001 *Civilisering en decivilisering: Studies over staatsvorming en geweld, nationalisme en vervolging*. Amsterdam: Boom.

■ 1947 PUBLICATION BY ELIAS

In 1947 Elias published an excerpt from his 1939 book *Über den Prozeß der Zivilisation* in Germany – for the first time in an official sense, because the book had not been distributed in Hitler's Germany. The part selected was the *Blick auf das Leben eines Ritters* ('Scenes from the Life of a Knight', pp. 376–94 in the 1997 Suhrkamp edition, and pp. 172–82 in the revised English translation of *The Civilising Process* published by Blackwells). It was published with a short preface in the monthly magazine *Neue Auslese* which was distributed from 1945 to 1950 for purposes of 're-education' by the Allied Information Service (Alliierten Informationsdienst) in the Russian, British and American zones of Germany and Austria. The magazine's full title was *Neue Auslese aus dem Schrifttum der Gegenwart* (from June 1947 amended to *Neue Auslese aus dem Schrifttum aller Länder*) and it contained short texts on various aspects of knowledge and culture, including *Mensch und Gesellschaft* (man and

society), *Internationale Fragen* (international politics), *Deutschland und die Welt* (Germany and the world), *Wirtschaft* (economics), *Bodenkultur* (agrarian culture), *Wiederaufbau* (reconstruction), *Erzählungen* (novels), *Kurzgeschichten* (short stories), and *Szenen* (plays or theater) – just to name a few of thirteen subsections. The authors were of international rank, from Karl Mannheim, Adolph Löwe, Reinhold Niebuhr, Harold Laski, Loren Eiseley, Liam O'Flaherty, Helmut James Graf von Moltke, Friedrich Meinecke to Alberto Moravia, Paul Valéry, Stefan Zweig and – not least – Norbert Elias. The volume in which Elias wrote also included letters by Thomas Jefferson, 'The natural and the political individual' (Edward Muir), 'Meeting with Stalin' (Harold Laski), 'Rotdorn' (Elizabeth Bowen), 'The old farm' (Homer Croy), 'Problems of women in England' (Weltwoche), 'Tricks of Propaganda' (Clyde Miller), 'At the crossover' (Friedelind Wagner). At the end of the magazine were short notes about some of the authors, but nothing about Elias. There is no indication of who were the editors, nor of their connections to Elias. Who invited him to contribute to this re-education programme?

The text is presented with reproductions of the pictures that he describes in the text. The introduction that he wrote for the text is new. It shows more clearly than ever before the purposes which guided the sociologist's interest: civilised human relations.

A translation of Elias's introductory remarks is given below.

Reinhard Blomert
Berlin

Author's Preface

Many people look at technology, economics and similar phenomena as the core of civilisation. That is a misunderstanding.

Central to the status and character of civilisation is the behaviour of people towards each other, their behaviour in every kind of situation, be it private or public, in everyday life and on special occasions. That is the touchstone for the

stage a people has reached on the long road of civilisation.

The forms of behaviour and of feeling that prevail in the relations between people do not only differ between from society (*Volk*) to society, but also change with a society in the course of history. But this change in human behaviour, the civilising process, is not a straightforward process; it is not necessarily, as was formerly often believed, a characteristic of continuous progress. In our own lifetime we have experienced a decline in forms of behaviour, a brutalisation and hardening of feelings in the relations between individuals, which may prove to be more enduring in their effects than the temporary economic decline or the destruction of houses and machines.

In my book *Über den Prozeß der Zivilisation* I investigated such changes in behaviour and their causes on a larger scale. The following excerpt gives a little picture of the state of the behaviour and affects of a stratum of German lords at the end of the Middle Ages.

Looking at this warrior stratum of late medieval knights, some see primarily their greatness, their passionate life as adventurers; they prefer to look at the



'nobleman'. Others speak of the wild, brute and barbaric life of these people; they can only see the tough feudal class, the oppressors of the peasants. But the behaviour of this warrior class, the atmosphere of their life and their position on the road to civilisation cannot be understood very well, if one views them only through the glasses of one's own antipathy or sympathy. I have tried to give the reader an unprejudiced picture by describing a series of drawings made in the knightly age; I think, they will give a more vivid and true picture of the feelings and behaviour of these people than the written word.



Some of the pictures are reproduced here in a miniaturised form. The whole series became famous under the title of *Das mittelalterliche Hausbuch*. The name of the artist is unknown. But it must have been a man, familiar with the life of the knights of his time, who unlike his artisan fellows saw the world through the eyes of a knight and identified himself with their social values. The drawings are from the late epoch of the knights, from the time of Charles the Bold and Maximilian, the 'last knight'. The people we see in the drawings are individuals of an epoch

of transition, in which a courtly aristocracy was replacing the knightly aristocracy. Despite that, they convey a good impression of the typical forms of the behaviour of the knight, of the way he spent his days, and of the people and things he saw around him. And about the way he saw them.

Neue Auslese, 2 Jg, Febr. 1947, p. 66–78

[Translation by Reinhard Blomert and Stephen Mennell]

Postscript

The hitherto unknown 1947 publication by Elias unearthed by Reinhard Blomert prompts two brief comments:

1. Until now, I had thought that the revised translation of *The Civilising Process* published by Blackwells in 2000 was the first instance of the key drawings from *Das mittelalterliche Hausbuch* being reproduced in conjunction with the text of 'Scenes from the Life of a Knight'. That Elias included them in 1947 confirms the obvious supposition that Elias would have liked to include them in the original book in 1939, but that the fraught circumstances of its publication prevented that.

2. As I noted in *Figurations* 15 in my report about David Rotman's recent research in the Elias archive at Marbach (see 'Elias in London (1)'), Elias worked for the British Foreign Office in the immediate postwar years, and made several visits to Germany under its auspices. The publication in *Neue Auslese* could well be connected with that. The connection could also have been made through old friends of Elias's, like Mannheim and Löwe, who were fellow contributors.

SJM

REVIEW ESSAY

Ton Zwaan,

Civilisering en Decivilisering: Studies over staatsvorming en geweld, nationalisme en vervolging. Amsterdam, Boom 2001, 461 pp. ISBN: 90-5352-696-X

As the very title of Ton Zwaan's fine book indicates, it is a collection of studies on a single theme: civilising and decivilising, or – as I would formulate it – the question of how to understand and explain discontinuities or severe retrograde movements in civilising processes. Zwaan addresses large and important questions, which are not as frequently discussed among figurational sociologists as they should be.

The main focus of the book is a number of examples of drastic decivilising in

the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, episodes in which civilising standards were replaced in a short time-span by – in Elias's terms – barbarisation and brutalisation of conduct. Zwaan prefers the more concrete terms persecution and mass murder to describe his case studies (the persecution of Armenians and of Jews, and the mass murder accompanying the disintegration of Yugoslavia). There are of course other cases, such as Cambodia and Rwanda. But the three cases Zwaan has studied all fall within the European state system, which makes comparisons less difficult. The Ottoman empire was included in the international relations of Europe, even though it can be argued that it was not itself part of Europe.

Zwaan's use of the concepts civilising-decivilising implies two processes

moving in opposite directions rather than an ever present possibility of reversals inherent in civilising processes, which can come to prevail in specific circumstances. Because Zwaan's aim is precisely to examine these circumstances, the civilising-decivilising conceptualisation is less relevant for his research than the title of his book suggests.

The Setting

In the first chapters of his book Zwaan provides the setting for his case studies. He begins with a general survey of the development of historical sociology, which includes a very clear presentation of Norbert Elias's analysis of the civilising process in Western Europe. As a whole this chapter is knowledgeable enough, but not necessary for what follows. It did in any case not hold me

captive, so I moved quickly to the second chapter. That is a quite pertinent and original discussion of processes of state and nation formation and of the wide spectrum of nationalisms, which proves its value for his case-studies later. The topic of this chapter is quite complex, strangled between abstract general theories and specific historical descriptions, which like East and West do not meet. Zwaan steers clear of both in a stimulating and balanced argument, which also clarifies the differences – and similarities – between the long term development of the state, nation and nationalism complex in Western, Central and Eastern Europe respectively. In the latter two that development was less continuous and nationalism became more radical and extreme than in the first. This relatively brief chapter can stand by itself. It cuts through much of the voluminous literature on the subject, making a large part of it superfluous.

Zwaan devotes his third chapter – a follow-up of the second rather than a building block for his main concern – to the question why there has been so little violence in Dutch political development after it became an independent state. He has written on this problem before, but he now limits himself to a political history – in itself very competent – of the Netherlands without making comparisons with the trajectories of the political development of other states. His comparisons are only between different periods of Dutch history. He makes it plausible that Dutch relative peacefulness is due to a combination of the Dutch position in the European balance of power (France, Britain and Germany remaining jealous of each other and therefore each trying to assure that no other great power would bring the Netherlands under its control) and the bourgeois character of the Dutch ruling class, lacking a military tradition. Kant's theory of the inherently peaceful disposition of the bourgeoisie – that they were only interested in international trade, which would make international politics of republics more peaceful than that of (by nature expansionist) dynastic states – could have come in here. But other kinds of comparisons could also have been illuminating. Has Dutch political development been very different from that of Scandinavia or

Switzerland? Are all great powers more violent in their internal political development than small states? Are there also differences in this respect between small states in Western, Central and Eastern Europe?

As a prelude to and context for his analysis of the persecution of Jews in Germany, as well as an application of the approach of the second chapter, Zwaan adds a concise but persuasive analysis of state and nation formation and nationalism in Germany from the eighteenth to the twentieth century.

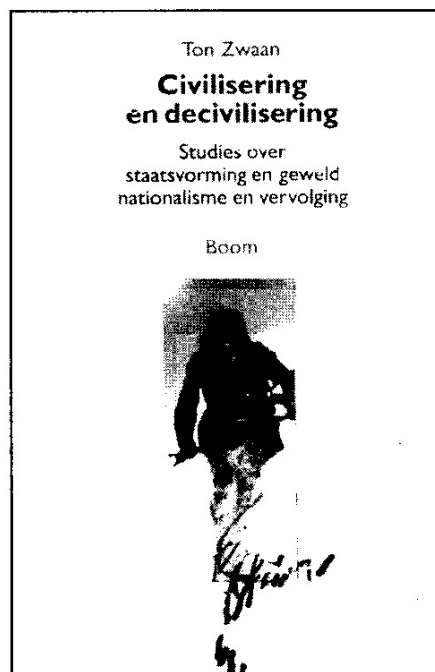
Explaining Persecution of Minorities

Then follow the most interesting and original case studies of three reversals of civilising processes (or decivilising episodes): the persecution of Armenians and their mass murder during the last decades of the Ottoman empire; the persecution and systematic murder of Jews during Nazi rule in Germany; and the systematic murder campaigns against citizens of rival former republics after Yugoslavia had disintegrated. The latter are known as 'ethnic cleansing', though the persecuted minorities were demarcated rather by religious and cultural-historical criteria.

These episodes of massive violence are not easy to tackle. The horrible character of the events makes it very difficult to find the balance between detachment and involvement needed in any

social analysis. The material with which Zwaan had to work can become at times unbearable for the researcher. But Zwaan managed to keep his wits together. He must be complimented for both the sense and the sensibility of his analysis. He has eschewed philosophical elaborations of the meaning of barbarisation for our time, and calmly analysed how and why persecution and mass murder could occur without any attempt to make them less terrible than they were. His reasoning is too nuanced and complex to be briefly summarized without trivialising it. But in his concluding chapter he develops a model of interconnections that holds in all three cases and shows the direction of his theorising. In all three cases two driving forces occur simultaneously: transnational – including international political – developments undermine the monopoly of violence of the state (I would add: and its power and prestige), while in domestic politics the competition between political entrepreneurs increases (and nationalism becomes more radical). In other words: the circumstances that can lead to violent persecution of a minority are a combination of simultaneous and progressive international decline of a state and domestic strife. This is, of course, a simplification of Zwaan's much more complex reasoning. It does make clear, however, that he does not stop at using a single discipline, but attempts to make a synthesis of different disciplinary and specific theoretical contributions, in which the connection between international and domestic processes figures prominently. His level-headed and moderate approach has produced a very valuable study in a field where angels fear to tread.

Godfried van Benthem van den Bergh
Den Haag





■ RECENT BOOKS AND ARTICLES

Abram de Swaan, *Human Societies: An Introduction*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2001. xii + 160 pp. ISBN: 0-7456-2591-6 (hb); 0-7456-2592-4 (pb)

Reviewing the Dutch original (*De mensenmaatschappij*. Amsterdam, Uitgeverij Bert Bakker, 1996) in *Figurations* 9, I wrote:

‘This brilliant little book represents Bram de Swaan’s distillation of three decades of thinking about the fundamentals of sociology and how to teach them....’

‘De Swaan begins from what people need from one another as interdependent beings: food, security, affection, and orientation. Then, in an approach that is at once analytical and historical, he looks at how people are mutually connected in more and more extensive networks. Next, what people expect of each other – including the problem of unintended consequences and blind processes. Then how people distinguish themselves from each other; how they educate each other (socialisation and civilisation); what they believe; how they accomplish tasks together; how states are formed (and states form people), and how a global society may be emerging.’

I then concluded by saying that translations of this scintillating book into English, German and other languages were urgently needed. Now we have a flowing and lucid English version by Beverly Jackson. I hope she will turn her attention to other books by the Dutch figurational circle.

The title in Dutch meant literally ‘The People Society’. I offered a small prize to whoever suggested the most elegant English title capturing this idea. The prize (which I failed to pay up, by the way) was won by the author himself, who came up with *Human Arrangements*. What a pity that Polity Press refused to allow that to be used, and insisted instead of the more pedestrian *Human Societies*. (The same team, Polity, also insisted on Johan Heilbron’s book being published as *The Rise of Social Theory*, when the whole point of his argument was to explain how nineteenth-century France moved away from mere ‘social theory’ and towards real sociology.)

I am using *Human Societies* as the textbook for my mass-class first-year introduction to Sociology at UCD, and I hope that many others will use it too. It elegantly conveys the figurational perspective, but surreptitiously through plain English. My one worry is that many of my fellow sociologists may, precisely because it is jargon-free and accessible, fail to perceive that this is actually a profound book.

SJM

Thomas Salumets, ed., *Norbert Elias and Human Interdependencies*. Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2001. xii + 272pp. ISBN: 0-7735-2196-8 (hb). (Paperback forthcoming late 2002.)

The essays in this book were presented at the conference held at the University of British Columbia, Vancouver, Canada in March 1997 – the first of the

series of conferences making the centenary of Norbert Elias’s birth, and also the first conference specifically on Elias’s ideas to be held in North America. (see the report in *Figurations* 7).

A distinctive feature of the conference, and of the resulting book, is the strong representation of contributors from the humanities (as opposed to the social sciences). Thus Thomas Kemple writes on ‘The trials of *homo clauses*: Elias, Weber and Goethe on the Sociogenesis of the Modern Self’, and Stephen Guy-Bray on ‘Civilising Sexuality: Marie de France’s Lay with Two Names’. Ulrich Teucher discusses ‘Writing in the Face of Death’, drawing on autobiographies of cancer victims. Helmut Kuzmics, himself a sociologist, discusses the relationship between literature and sociology in Elias.

Tom Scheff was unable to attend the conference, but he contributes an important essay ‘Unpacking the civilising process: interdependence and shame’. Annette Treibel writes on the changing balances of power between men and women, providing a figurational study of the public and private spheres in Western societies. Very different is Reinhard Blomert’s essay on the ‘second pillar of state power’: the pillar of money and taxation. And Jorge Ardití explores ‘netiquette’: the developing manners of the internet.

Finally the book includes contributions by some of the usual suspects: Hermann Korte’s opening lecture on Elias, Cas Wouters on the integration of classes and sexes in the twentieth century, Godfried van Benthem van den Bergh on two meanings of nationalism, and myself with essays on decivilising processes and on the ‘American civilising process’.

This book is a welcome addition to the growing number of texts that are not only of interest to scholars interested in Elias but can also be fruitfully used as teaching material at the undergraduate and postgraduate level.

SJM



Cas Smithuijsen: *Een verbazende stilte: Klassieke muziek, gedragsregels en sociale controle in de concertzaal.* Amsterdam: Boekmanstudies, 2001. 166 pp., incl. bibliography, index and English summary. ISBN 90-6650-0619-7.

This book is the published Dutch version of the doctoral thesis *An Amazing Silence: Classical Concerts and Social Control* submitted in English to the University of Amsterdam and successfully defended earlier this year by Cas Smithuijsen, Director of the Boekman Foundation.

Although codes of social behaviour in Western societies have relaxed considerably over the past few decades, still very strict rules of behaviour are observed both among the musicians and the audience at concerts where the classical repertoire is performed. Respectful and erudite attention are transferred through long-term learning processes: audiences are instructed how to behave more or less in the same way musicians learn how to play during their training. Those attending recitals or concerts given by ensembles form but a small percentage of the population. The Social and Cultural Planning Bureau in The Hague pointed out that only one percent of the time spent listening to classical music is passed in concert halls during live concerts. Outside concert halls interest in classical music is considerably greater – in private homes people listen to CDs or the radio, in the open air people attend concerts in a more informal way. There, the audience is socially less homogenous as it is in concert halls.

An Amazing Silence tries to find explanations for why, for a very long time now, only a relatively small selection of high educated, well-mannered people

have attended classical concerts. The answer to this question is not sought in the specific repertoire, but in the specific social situation, stimulating a pattern of social conduct that tends to create a distance between the ‘high’ classical music in concert halls and the classical music distributed in less formal situations, for instance parks or other open air spaces.

Formal concert behaviour as a social phenomenon fits into theories about social distance. For instance Norbert Elias shows that in periods of democratisation and social equalisation, the established are constantly looking for ways to keep ‘invaders’ at a distance, although this does not always happen openly and deliberately. The social constraint that contributes to official concert life is not only built up by musical experiences, knowledge and skills that are communicated between players and listeners. Fear (stage fright) and feelings of insecurity (attendance fright) are also communicated, and with them the psychological strategies used to overcome them on stage and amongst the listeners. Where the majority of the established in concert halls feel secure in knowing the right way to behave, newcomers may well experience these social conventions as psychological barriers.



Johan Goudsblom, ‘Norbert Elias and American Sociology’, *Sociologia Internationalis*, 38 (2) 2000: 173–80.

In this article four questions are raised about the relationship between Norbert Elias and American sociology: (1) What did Elias know and think of American sociology? (2) What did American sociologists know and think of Elias? (3) Could Elias have profited from the contributions of American sociology? (4) Could American sociology have profited more from Elias’s work? The last question also pertains to the present: what makes Elias’s work still interesting for American sociologists today?



Graham Curry *Football: A Study in Diffusion.* Unpublished PhD thesis,

University of Leicester, 2001

The subject of this thesis is the diffusion of the game of football, tracing its development back to the more prestigious English public schools, through the Universities of Cambridge and Oxford and into adult society. Early club formation and the gradual nationalisation of the game throughout Britain, with particular reference to England and Scotland, is studied in detail. Careful examination is made of the initial meetings of the Football Association leading to the bifurcation of the sport into soccer and rugby. From that point the study concentrates on the Association form, looking especially at the emergence of professional players. Later the global diffusion of Association Football from the United Kingdom is analysed. The underlying task of this study, however, is to test Eric Dunning’s theory of status rivalry between the English public schools of Eton and Rugby, a rivalry which was partially expressed through the promotion of their particular styles of football.



Gunnar Olofsson, ‘Norbert Elias’, in Heine Andersen and Lars Bo Kaspersen, eds., *Classical and Modern Social Theory.* pp.361-75, Oxford: Blackwell, 2000, xii + 524pp. ISBN: 0-631-21287-6 (hb); 0-631-21288-4 (pb).

Gunnar Olofsson’s article on Elias packs an astonishing amount into 14 pages: a biographical sketch, a summary of the theory of civilising processes, a discussion of the role of courts in the process, an account of Elias’s game models, an exposition of his ideas about power ratios and about established-outsider relationships, and it concludes with an effective summary of Elias’s methodological views, such as his critique of dualism and of process reduction.

The book in which this appears was first published in Danish in 1996. Placing Elias at the end of the section on ‘Modern Social Theories’ (after Habermas and Luhmann and before Giddens), it demonstrates the increasing unavailability of Elias in sociological theory today.



Helmut Kuzmics, 'Aristocracy and Bourgeoisie in Late Nineteenth-Century Prussia and England: Comparing Processes of Individualisation in Fontane and Trollope', pp. 153–66 in Patricia Howe and Helen Chambers, eds, *Theodor Fontane and the European Context: Literature, Culture and Society in Prussia and Europe*. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2001.

Helmut Kuzmics, 'Bürgerliche Individualisierung im vormärzlichen Österreich: Grillparzer, der arme Spielmann', in Eduard Beutner and Ulrike Tanzer, eds, *Literatur als Geschichte des Ich*. Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2000, pp. 104–117.

In these two essays, the prolific Helmut Kuzmics further explores the uses of literature as sociological and social historical evidence that was exemplified in his major book with Roland Axtmann (*Autorität, Staat und Nationalcharakter*, 2000, see *Figurations* 15). The article comparing Fontane and Trollope is especially welcome for giving the flavour in English of the much longer book. The essay centring on Grillparzer in the edited volume on 'Literature as History of the Ego' focuses specifically on Austria. Besides being a landmark in the sociology of literature from a figurational standpoint, the book and Kuzmics's associated essays represent a great achievement in the comparative historical sociology of European societies.

SJM



Nina Rubinstein, *Die französische Emigration nach 1789: Ein Beitrag zur Soziologie der politischen Emigration*. Edited and with an introduction by Dirk Raith with contributions by Hanna Papanek and David Kettler. (Bibliothek sozialwissenschaftlicher Emigranten.) Graz/Wien: Nausner & Nausner, 2000.

In the course of a study that Volker Meja and I were making of Karl Mannheim and his women students, I was led about a dozen years ago to a dissertation on the French émigrés of 1789,

subtitled a 'sociological study of political emigration' by a woman living in New York, who had worked with both Elias and Mannheim in Heidelberg and Frankfurt and who finished up in April 1933, when she and Mannheim both fled the country. She had a 1930 letter from Elias in her files, as well as numerous drafts with Mannheim's corrections.

The human interest story was nicely knotted because she was herself a daughter of the Menshevik political emigration to Berlin, even before she fled again. Despite some attempts to restart her sociological work at the Sorbonne, during her exile stop there, and at the New School, Rubinstein made her life as a simultaneous translator at the UN. She died two years ago, after a ghastly extended endgame with Alzheimer's.

The scientifically interesting story is the dissertation itself, of course, which is developed as a qualification to the 'stranger' story from Simmel to Mannheim.

With the help of Rubinstein's half-sister Claudia Honegger (now a professor at Berne), the anthropologist Hanna Papanek and I persuaded Frankfurt to award the degree in 1989 (when Rubinstein was 81), but we could not organize a publication at the time. Now Christian Fleck has included it in his series documenting the history of Austrian sociology.

The book contains a very good introduction by Dirk Raith, one of Fleck's students, in which he tries to work out the differences between the influences of Elias and Mannheim traceable in the text, as well as some documentation by Papanek and myself; and the whole is a very attractive book.

A preview of the book, a short excerpt from Rubinstein's preliminary studies, and an overview of the archival holdings are to be found in Newsletter no. 19, *Archiv für die Geschichte der Soziologie in Österreich* (December 1999) 32–47.

David Kettler
Bard College



Pablo Jáuregui, 'National Pride and the Meanings of "Europe": A Comparative Study of Britain and Spain'. Unpublished PhD thesis, Department of Political and Social Sciences, European University Institute, Florence – defended 25 September 2001.

Abstract: This thesis has two fundamental objectives. On the one hand, at the level of theoretical generalization, it aims to make a contribution to the study of collective identities, and more specifically, of national identities within the context of European integration. On the other, at the level of empirical investigation, it aims to compare how the collective ideals, 'memories', and sentiments of two national communities, Britain and Spain, have conditioned the diverse symbolic representations of 'Europe' which have emerged over the course of time in the public spheres of these two particular case-studies.

The thesis is divided into four parts. In my initial introductory section, I outline a theoretical and methodological approach to the study of national identity, which fundamentally stresses the *affective* dimension of this phenomenon. Following the insights of Norbert Elias – as well as of earlier sociological thinkers such as Emile Durkheim and Max Weber, and also of contemporary authors such as Thomas Scheff and Pierre Bourdieu – I argue that national identities should be understood as the historically developed (and developing) *we-images* and *we-feelings* which human beings collectively share about themselves as members of national communities. In particular, I focus on the collective emotions of relative superiority and inferiority, or pride and shame, which nationalized individuals experience in response to their nation's triumphs and defeats in different fields of international status-competition, such as those of political strength, economic prosperity, cultural prestige, moral respectability, and so on. At the same time, I emphasize that such national ideals and emotions should be analyzed as historically conditioned, politically contested symbols and sentiments which are constantly invoked in the discursive struggles for power and legitimacy which take place

in contemporary nation-state societies. In the next two sections, I empirically apply this theoretical and methodological approach by carrying out a comparative and historical analysis of the different collective representations and symbolic meanings of 'Europe' which have gradually emerged in the particular national contexts of Britain and Spain, since the end of the Second World War. In particular, I focus on the dominant political and media discourses on the EEC/EU which arose in these two countries at three critical junctures of their relations with the process of European integration: their initial failed attempts to 'enter Europe'; their eventual successful accessions 'into Europe'; and their diverse responses to the birth of the 'European Union', which was officially established by the Treaty of Maastricht. My fundamental argument throughout this analysis is that while in Britain the idea of 'Europe' became widely associated with a decline of national status after the loss of 'world power', in Spain, on the contrary, this concept symbolized a crucial enhancement of national prestige following the collapse of a 'backward dictatorship'.

Finally, in my concluding section, I suggest that this sharp symbolic and emotional contrast between the cases of Britain and Spain demonstrates that the development of the European Union has not eroded or eliminated the collective ideals and sentiments of nationhood. On the contrary, national we-images and we-feelings should rather be seen as the fundamental factors which have conditioned, and are continuing to condition, the degrees of collective enthusiasm or hostility which are generally felt towards the project of European integration in the different member states of the EU.



Peter Burke, 'Civilisation, Discipline, Disorder: Three Case-Studies in History and Social Theory' in Bo Strath and Nina Witoszek (eds) *The Post-modern Challenge: Perspectives East and West*. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1999, pp.97-115.

The purpose of this article is to discuss the relation between history and social

theory from the point of view of a socio-cultural historian and with reference to three thinkers – Norbert Elias, Michel Foucault and Mikhail Bakhtin – who belonged to, or better emerged from, very different cultures and disciplines. Such a theme may give the impression of intellectual juggling, of the attempt to keep three balls in the air at the same time, but a more appropriate metaphor comes from billiards. The object of the exercise is to bounce these theorists off one another, to divine them by contrast to one another, or in more Bakhtinian terms to allow them to engage in dialogue with one another.



Takashi Okumura, *Elias: Boryoku eno Toi* [Norbert Elias: Enquiries into Violence]. Tokyo: Keiso Shobo Publishing, 2001. xxii + 353 pp. ISBN: 4-326-65253-5.

Takashi Okumura spent two years in Leicester working with Eric Dunning. Readers who attended the European Sociological Association conference in Amsterdam in August 1999 will remember Takashi's extempore remarks about the civilising offensive in Japan to make the peasants stop shuffling and to pick up their feet as they walked.

Now Takashi has written the first full-length study of Elias in Japanese. Needless to say, I am unable to read it, and I haven't found a Japanese-reading reviewer – volunteers welcome for *Figurations* 17! But, from having talked to Takashi about the book as he was writing it, I know it is comprehensive in its presentation of Elias's work as a whole and will prove invaluable in making Elias better known in Japan.

SJM

■ AUTHORS' ANNOUNCEMENTS

Guy Ankerl, *Global Communication without Universal Civilization, Book One: Coexisting Contemporary Civilizations: Arabo-Muslim, Bharati, Chinese, and Western*. Geneva: INU Press. 530 pp. ISBN: 2881550045 \$40.

Some important questions discussed in this book:

Are there any civilizations other than the Western one living in our so-called Global-Age?
 'Eastern civilisation'? Is the concept of East anything more than non-West? Or does there only exist, in reality, a distinct Chinese, Indian, Arabo-Muslim, and Western civilisation?
 Is the construction of large civilisation-states such as China and India an unparalleled historical achievement?
 Do economic ties always eclipse other forms of affiliation such as those formed through kinship or between speech communities?
 What is the role of the 'Latin' and the Jewish Peoples in our Anglo-American-lead Western world?
 Is English today the global language or merely an international?
 Is the Chinese thought pattern closely related to its writing system?
 Is today's world one of (symmetrical) interdependence? Or rather one of hegemony?
 If the so-called North-South or East-West dialogue fails in construction a universally accepted world civilisation, then what is the appropriate arrangement for reaching such a consensus within humankind?

Orders: Via e-mail: inu@inuge.ch or by www.Amazon.com
 For more details see www.inuge.ch

■ FORTHCOMING CONFERENCES

Figurational Stream at the: BSA ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2002 'Reshaping the Social'

Venue: University of Leicester
 Date: 25–27 March 2002

Stream title: 'Developing Elias: Figurational Sociology – research and debates'

The BSA Annual Conference 2002 is set to be held at the University of Leicester. It is most appropriate, therefore, that a stream is devoted to a key figure in the development of sociology at Leicester: Norbert Elias. A central aim of this stream is to promote a spirit of openness in the Figurational Sociology 'community', and to stimulate

further interest in Elias's work. Papers are invited on empirical and theoretical studies that draw upon the work of Elias, including critical discussions of his work. Also invited are papers from any sociological tradition on key figurational themes, specifically:

- The Sociology of the Body
- The Sociology of the Emotions
- The Sociology of Sport and Leisure
- The Sociology of Knowledge
- Civilising and Decivilising processes.
- Established-Outsider Relations.
- Involvement and Detachment
- Scientific Establishments
- Sociology and Psychology
- Sociology and Biology
- Power and Social Dynamics
- Sociology at Leicester

Please send abstract submissions to:

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■ ELIAS PHD STUDENTS NETWORK

An international network has been established 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 has been set up. This will provide a convenient forum for discussion of academic questions of common 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 is

Kitty Roukens of SISWO in Amsterdam, since the owner has to hold a post in the Dutch academic system.)

To make this work effectively, as many postgraduates as possible need to enroll and contribute.

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.

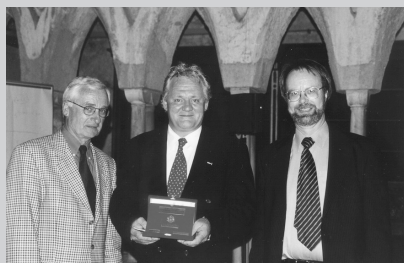
At a later stage, it is hoped that it may be possible to bring members of the network together in conferences, and then perhaps supervisors would play some role. But that is for the future.

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

■ FIGURATIONS ON THE NET

Back numbers of *Figurations* can be found on the website created by Robert van Krieken at the University of Sydney:
<http://www.usyd.edu.au/su/social/elias/figsframe.html>



Wilbert van Vree wins the second Norbert Elias Amalfi Prize

This year's prize was presented to Dr Van Vree at a ceremony in Amalfi on 26 May.

■ CONTRIBUTIONS TO FIGURATIONS

The next issue of *Figurations* will be mailed in May 2002. News and notes should be sent to the Editors by 1 April 2002.

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Contributions should preferably be e-mailed to the Editor, or sent on a disk (formatted for PC, not Apple Mackintosh), Microsoft Word (up to 7), Rich Text and plain text files can all be handled. Do not use embedded footnotes. Hard copy is accepted reluctantly.

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