

Figurations

Newsletter of the Norbert Elias Foundation

■ TRUSTEES PLAN THE ELIAS CENTENARY, 1997

Norbert Elias was born on 22 June 1897. The Board of the Elias Foundation met with a number of colleagues in Marbach-am-Neckar on 9-11 June to discuss plans for the celebration in 1997 of the centenary of his birth.

As a result, we are able to announce that the central event marking the centenary will take place in Marbach on 20-22 June, 1997, organised jointly by the Foundation and by the Deutsche National Literaturarchiv.

We already know that many other events will be organised around the

world during the centenary year (see the provisional listing below). The Foundation will compile a small brochure, to be published early in 1997, giving details of all events worldwide.

Everyone who is arranging events - conferences, lectures, exhibitions or whatever - is asked to keep us informed of their plans. We want the brochure to be as complete and comprehensive as possible. And, through *Figurations* and via the Internet, we shall try to ensure that everyone is kept informed so that as far as possible the dates of the various events do not clash.

■ PLANS TO DATE

Elias Foundation Centenary Conference Marbach-am-Neckar, 20-22 June 1997

Ending on the centenary date itself, this conference will (as announced above) be hosted by the Elias Foundation and the German National Literature Archive in Marbach, where the Elias Papers are now housed.

The focus of the conference will be at least as much on the present and future importance of Elias's ideas - the theory of civilising processes at the end of the twentieth century - as retrospectively on Elias's life. It is anticipated that there will be two opening lectures, one on the relations between individual life-history and the history

of societies, as exemplified in the person of Norbert Elias, and the second comparing processes of biological evolution and social development.

Provisionally, the rest of the conference will take the form of a colloquium, with three working groups:

1. Reflection, Revision and the Future - the theory of civilising processes at the end of the twentieth century (Convenor: Annette Treibel).
2. Decivilising Processes (Convenor: Stephen Mennell)
3. Symbol-Formation and Language in

the Literature of the early Twentieth-Century (Convenor: Christoph König) The venue can accommodate 80-100 participants. The conference languages will be German and English (without simultaneous translation).

It is hoped to publish a more formal call for papers in *Figurations 5*, when plans are a little more definite.

Elias and the Middle Ages.

Johann Arnason would like to organise a small conference, or a section at one of the other conferences in 1997 (perhaps Amsterdam, see below), to discuss the relevance and current standing of Elias's writings on the European Middle Ages to current medieval scholarship. Readers who are interested are asked to contact Johann, and are also asked to draw this to the attention of any medievalists among their acquaintances. The address is: Dr Johann Arnason, Department of Sociology and Anthropology, La Trobe University, Bundoora, Vic. 3083, Australia. Fax: +61-3-479 2705.

Interdependencies North American Elias Centenary Conference Vancouver, 20-22 March 1997

The University of British Columbia, Vancouver, Canada is hosting an international conference on Norbert Elias. The Conference Committee invites papers exploring Norbert Elias and human interdependencies at the inter-

sections between race, gender, class, sexuality, culture, nationality, and technology.

Papers should be in English and should not exceed 30 minutes speaking time.

Abstracts will be accepted by: Thomas Salumets, Chair, Programme in Comparative Literature, University of British Columbia, 1866 Main Mall, Bu E270, Vancouver, B.C. V6T 1Z1, Canada.

E-mail: salumets@unixg.ubc.ca, Fax: +1-604 822 4978

Deadline for abstracts is February 1, 1996.

The Construction of the Parliamentary State Elias Centenary Conference in Paris

Bernard Lacroix and Alain Garrigou (Nanterre) are organising a centenary conference on "The Construction of the Parliamentary State" in Paris in May or June 1997 - the exact date is yet to be fixed, but will be announced in *Figurations* 5. In the meantime, potential participants are asked to contact: Prof. Bernard Lacroix, Groupe d'Analyse Politique, Université de Paris X - Nanterre, 200 Avenue de la République, F-92001 Nanterre Cedex, France. Fax: +33-1-40 97 76 56

Elias Centenary Sessions at the ASA, Toronto, 9-13 August, 1997

Jorge Ardití and Stephen Mennell intend to organise sessions at the American Sociological Association 1997 Annual Meeting in Toronto. A formal call for papers will be made later, but anyone interested in participating is asked to contact: Jorge Ardití, Department of Sociology, State University of New York Buffalo, Buffalo, NY 14620-4140, USA.

E-mail: ardití@acsu.buffalo.edu

Elias Centenary Conference for Latin America Bucaramanga, Colombia, 19-21 August, 1997

Social scientists from the National University of Colombia and the Industrial University of Bucaramanga are organising an International Symposium on the work of Norbert Elias. Elias's writings are as yet not widely known in Latin America, though interest is grow-

ing, and it is hoped that several leading "figurational" scholars from Europe and elsewhere - will join Latin American colleagues in discussing all aspects of Elias's ideas. Further details will be published in *Figurations* 5. In the meantime, all who are interested should contact Dr Vera Weiler, Departamento de Historia, Universidad Nacional de Colombia, Edificio Manuel Ancizar, Ciudad Universitaria, Santafé de Bogotá. Fax: +57-1-222 5285. E-mail: weiler@hemeroteca.icfes.gov.co

Study Group for the Sociology of Human Processes and Figurations (UK) Cambridge, 18-21 September 1997

To mark the Norbert Elias Centenary in Britain a conference will take place in Cambridge during 18-21 September 1997. The following themes will be addressed:

1. Norbert Elias and British Sociology, 1940s-1990s.
2. Interdisciplinary applications of Figuration Studies.

In addition, a limited number of "free" papers will be accepted.

Proposals are welcome from colleagues in all parts of the world and should be sent to Dr Paul J. Nixon, Public Programmes, University of Cambridge, Madingley Hall, Cambridge CB3 8AQ, England. Telephone/Fax (direct line): 01223-360927

(International:+44-1223-360927);
E-mail: pn203@cam.ac.uk; or
aab3@cam.ac.uk.

Australian Elias Centenary Conference

Robert van Krieken (University of Sydney), Steve Russell (Monash University Gippsland) and Jonathan Fletcher (who has recently moved from Amsterdam to Sydney) are likely to organise a centenary event in Australia. More definite news later. In the meantime, potential participants are asked to contact: Dr Steve Russell, School of Humanities and Social Sciences, Monash University Gippsland, Switchback Road, Churchill, Vic. Australia.

E-mail: stever@ghss.cc.monash.edu.au
Fax: +61-51-226359

Monopolies of Violence: Formation and Breakdown Amsterdam, 18-21 December 1997

Designed to round off the centenary year, this conference is being designed for maximum appeal, and we envisage that in numbers of participants, it will be on a larger scale than that at Marbach.

A Call for Papers will appear in the next issue of *Figurations* (and elsewhere). In the meantime, contact Kitty Verrips at: SISWO, Plantage Muidergracht 4, 1018 TV Amsterdam, The Netherlands phone +31.20.5270620 e-mail verrips@siswo.uva.nl

FIGURATIONAL STUDIES ON THE WORLD WIDE WEB

Stephen Mennell and Paul Stokes e-mail: pstokes@ollamh.ucd.ie

Department of Sociology University College Dublin Belfield, Dublin 4, Ireland

Newspapers throughout the world have been full, these last few months, of articles about the Internet and its radical implications (if one believes the hype, not the hypertext) for the future of human society. No doubt figurationists should be busy studying its likely consequences from a relatively detached point of view. In the meantime, a number of us have begun to make available on the World Wide Web news and research material relevant to everyone interested the work of Elias and its use in current research. And not just to the small circle who read *Figurations*, but equally to any-

one anywhere who is "surfing the net", as the saying goes.

Three "Eliasian" Websites are already (to use more jargon) "open to visitors". They are located at University College Dublin (Paul Stokes and Stephen Mennell), the University of Sydney (Robert van Krieken) and the University of British Columbia (Thomas Salumets).

The first thing to make clear to readers who have not yet used the WWW is that these websites are *not* intended in any way to replace either *Figurations*

in hard copy or the ELIAS-I e-mail discussion list managed by Kitty Verrips from SISWO, Amsterdam. For the exchange of messages between those who have enrolled in a discussion list, e-mail still has no rivals for speed and convenience. WWW does something different. Information posted on a "website" can be read and downloaded by anyone in any part of the world who has a computer linked to the Internet.

What Equipment is Needed to Access the Net?

All that is needed is a PC or Mac which has been registered for Internet access, along with (either on the hard disk or on a network server) the fabulous Netscape browser program. Running Netscape on a PC also requires a program called Trumpet Winsock; unless you are a technical wizard, you may need help in installing the latter properly.

Once you have Netscape installed, it is simplicity itself to use. You can use it to browse across the world in search of unknown riches, or you can "point" it at a specific site the address of which you already know. Once having located a useful site, you can instantly set up a "bookmark" to find it quickly again in the future, or you can download information on to your own computer.

The International Figurational Studies Website

This site was established at University College Dublin, after SISWO (publishers of *Figurations*) had resisted our blandishments to locate the site there.

The address of the UCD website is:
<http://www.ucd.ie/~figuration/fighome.html>

We want to emphasise that we are still "under construction", but there is a fair amount of material available now, and more to be available shortly.

Aims

The principal aim of the UCD site is to provide a considerable resource for everyone worldwide who is interested

in using either the work of Norbert Elias himself or, increasingly, the large body of work that others have developed by building on his ideas and using his concepts. At least for the moment it is not visually very exciting, but it should gradually become a very powerful research tool.

Contents

Available now, or in the very near future, are the following:

1. An explanation of what "figurational studies" and "process sociology" signify. We have followed Paul Nixon in using the term "figurational studies" because by no means everyone in our increasingly far-flung network is a sociologist by disciplinary background.
2. A brief biography of Norbert Elias, along with Bart Jonkers' semi-official portrait of him - this has digitised rather successfully.
3. A brief essay on the main principles of the "figurational" or "process" approach.
4. A list of the key figures in the loosely defined figurational research network, listed country by country. We have already provided a few people with short intellectual biographies. They may wish to revise and extend them. Others are simply for the moment listed by name.

Notes:

- (a) if you are not yet listed, do not take offence, but send us your entry as soon as possible.
- (b) if your entry is inaccurate or inadequate, send us a revision.
- (c) please send us a photograph of yourself so that we can digitise them and post them with your entry.

5. Bibliography of Norbert Elias.
At present you can consult and download the list of Elias's writings supplied by Saskia Visser of the Norbert Elias Foundation. We shall shortly also be posting the even more comprehensive bibliography (including interviews, television programmes and so forth) prepared by Gerhard Fröhlich and Ingo Moerth (this is in German, but lists writings in other languages).

Eventually, we should like to integrate these two bibliographies, but for the moment you may find it useful to con-

sult both.

6. Willem Kranendock's bibliography of Dutch Figurational Sociology up to 1990. This is carefully organised into sections subject-by-subject, with full cross-referencing. It is wonderfully comprehensive, but is confined to writings by Dutch sociologists (and writings by a few others which were published in the Netherlands), and needs updating from 1990.
7. Downloadable back-issues of the *Figurations* newsletter. We may be able to make available the text of *Figurations 4* on the Web even before it is printed.

Hyperlinks

"Hyperlinks", in WWW jargon, are cross-references at one site to other pages, which may be at other sites anywhere in the world. One just clicks one's mouse on the hyperlink, and is connected to the other page. Hyperlinks will be provided at UCD to Thomas Salumets's site at UBC, Vancouver, specialising in Elias and Literature, and to Robert van Krieken's Australian site, and they will in turn provide hyperlinks to UCD and each other. The URL addresses for the other sites are:

Literature and Process Sociology:

<http://www.arts.ubc.ca/german/lps/elias.html>

Contact: Thomas Salumets,
e-mail: salumets@unixg.ubc.ca
Germanic Studies/Comparative Literature,
University of British Columbia,
Vancouver, B.C. Canada V6T 1Z1
fax: +1-604 822-9344
tel.: +1-604-822-5118 (office); +1-604 822-6403 (secr.).

Australian Elias Website:

<http://www.arts.su.edu.au/Arts/parts/social/elias/elias.html>

Contact: Robert van Krieken
e-mail: robertvk@extro.ucc.su.oz.au

Robert is particularly planning to make available current abstracts and up-to-date worldwide news. We hope that Robert van Krieken and Thomas Salumets will write more about this in the next issue of *Figurations*. In the meantime, we at University College Dublin

would like readers to send us material:

Action needed on your part

1. We should welcome comments and suggestions for further construction work on this site.
2. We should like all Dutch readers to send us bibliographies (in electronic form) of their relevant writings since 1990.

3. We should like readers in all other countries to send us bibliographies (in electronic form) of their relevant work whatever the date.

4. Photographs of the *dramatis personae* will always be welcome.

5. Send these to us at the address given at the head of this article.

■ EUROPEAN INTEGRATION AND NORBERT ELIAS'S SOCIOLOGY

European integration is an intriguing process. How is it possible that states living in mutual rivalry for centuries have stopped fighting and started a single market controlled by mutual consent? The answer often runs: "The Common Market will serve to promote the wealth and peace of the various nations". But that is not satisfactory. If this expectation as such really drives nations together, human society would have exhibited more common markets in the past than it did, and harbour more of them than it actually does today. So there must be different explanations.

Certainly, markets as loci of exchange and barter are very old and very widespread. But - and this is the point - large markets without internal barriers of customs and taxation, so-called free or "common" markets, are *not* very common in the other sense of the word. They were constructed rather recently and in specific places. They arose in Europe, and were directly related to the processes of state-formation on this continent. More precisely, they came into existence - first in England, then in France and later in Germany - long after the violent competition between smaller units had come to an end, when a winner had emerged from what Elias called the competitive elimination-contest and through the operation of the monopoly mechanism, and when the central state monopolies of violence and taxation had been established.

This leads to a two-fold conclusion. First, market formation follows state-formation. Second, because state-formation itself is the result of violent

competition, market formation follows indirectly after war. With this in mind, a double question must be answered: in what ways does recent European integration confirm these rules, and in what ways does it not?

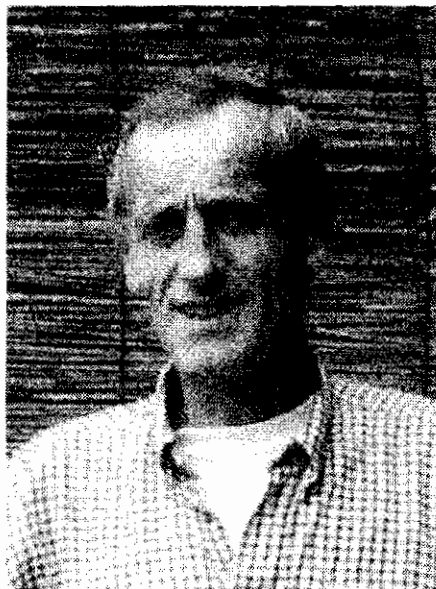
In my book *The Stateless Market* (London, Routledge, 1995), I came to two conclusions:

1. In its first phase - from 1945 until 1970 - European integration must be seen as the outcome of the Second World War. The USA, one of the new monopoly holders brought forward by violent competition, constructed politically and economically - like other winners of such competitions before it - a new *imperium*, including NATO and the European Community. Up to this point, the rules are confirmed. However, in the second phase - from 1970 until the present - Europe has become an exception to the rules. The integrating force was no longer American dominance; rather, it was the economic threat from other continents that strengthened both the Europeans' *willingness* to co-operate, and also (thanks to the institutions already established in the first phase) their *actual* co-operation.

2. The second conclusion is more theoretical and refers to Elias's theory of the competitive monopoly mechanism, according to which violence is the basis of the genesis of central state authority. The Common Market, however, gave rise to some kind of central authority of its own, especially in the second phase, without violence. If this central power - organised principally on an inter-state level - endures, its

formation is at odds with Elias's theory. Therefore I formulated what I called the "hostage model" in which, thanks to a tight net of interdependencies - common rules are obeyed not by force but by the fear that if A serves its direct interests by not obeying the rules, he can expect that B, C, *et al.* will do the same and consequently will harm the interest of A. In other words, the more the interests of states become intertwined, the more are they hostages to one another and, *vice versa*, the more they realise this vulnerable position, the more they intertwine their interests.

The "Stateless Market", with its central authority based not on violence but on mutual vulnerability, also has consequences for what Elias labelled the civilising process. The question is how far liberalised economic competition constrains the nations with more developed national civilising patterns



Paul Kapteyn

to adapt themselves to the level of the less developed ones, with decivilising consequences for Europe's civilisation as a whole. The probability of this rather grim scenario depends on how the balance of power develops between the national and the common authorities. As far as I can see, the national level is losing power much more rapidly than the common level is gaining it. Therefore the downward adaptation of the more developed national civilising patterns is already evident, and it will continue in the near future.

On the other hand, however, although the increase of common powers is not compensating the decrease of national ones, it is strong enough to press the less developed civilisations in an upward direction while the more developed are going "down". These two movements, with their contradictory arguments and interests, are constituting the European civilising process at present and into the immediate future. I give

two examples in the book: first, the negotiations for the Schengen Treaty and the removal of frontier controls; and, second, fraud in relation to agricultural subsidies. They illustrate in more detail the arguments I have been able to sketch here only in bold outline.

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Universiteit van Amsterdam

■ SECTS AND SOCIOLOGY

In the last issue of *Figurations*, Stephen Menzell formulated some ideas about - and against - sectarianism. There is not much to disagree with his arguments, but I wonder whether the whole issue could not be given a somewhat different turn.

The word "sect" today has a unequivocally negative connotation. If we denote something as a sect, it is to condemn. However, such an evaluation is not at all self-evident. As is common knowledge, Max Weber was much concerned with the pivotal role sects played in world history as sources of spiritual revival. This view can also be supported, from a different side, by the "infant industry" argument of the nineteenth-century German economist Friedrich List: whatever is new and original needs protection in order to take roots.

This perspective could be applied to the history of the sociology as well. The contemporary mainstream line of sociology was created by the integration of two sects: the Marxian and the Durkheimian sects. The full substantiation of this claim would require more space; only a few suggestions can be given here. The success of a sect depends on a devoted group of disciples who work to spread its ideas and consolidate its influence through institutional means. This applies evidently to Marxism, but also for Durkheimian sociology;¹ on the other hand Weber had no disciples and no secure institutional basis in the academic or political hierarchy. Even when Weber was promoted as a "founding father", the strong institutional presence of Durkheimian sociology, together with its affinity to the dominant currents of

positivism and moralisation, was preserved. According to Jeffrey Alexander, while Parsons took many ideas from Weber, the framework was provided by Durkheim.² One must be careful here: the point concerns the subtle links and interactions between the sheer power of innovative ideas (both Durkheim and Marx were highly innovative thinkers), the extent to which they accommodate and reflect the dominant intellectual mood (this is a matter of "timeliness", as opposed to the "untimeliness" of many innovative thinkers), and support they gain in institutional and power structures.

The constitutive dualism of modern sociology was the opposition between mainstream (Durkheimian) and critical (Marxist) approaches. Weber's ideas never fitted well into this semantic space, and were either reduced to a Durkheimian structural-functionalism or a Marxian concern with capitalism and classes. They also fed alternative currents like phenomenological or historical sociology. It was this configuration that was decisively terminated by the events of 1989. These events, however, had been anticipated in social theory for decades, by the collapse of the alternative of Marxism, and in a quite peculiar way. The major theoretical undertakings of the last couple of decades (Habermas and Giddens, even Bourdieu) have all tried to solve the joint impasse of structural-functional sociology and critical theory by synthesising the two. Though this had the beneficial consequence of eliminating an obsolete and absurd ideological division, it also led to a standstill, where the relative paucity of insights was only concealed by a scarcely intelligible specialised lan-

guage, with little potential for internal renewal. Standstills, however, are also always opportunities. But advantage of these opportunities can only be taken by those who are prepared in advance, on the basis of existing work already done. Such works are typically the products of lonely, arduous, often even quixotic undertakings that up till then had found a real response only among disciples, grouped in small, self-defensive sects.

This defines a manner in which the task of social thought for the post-1989 present can be defined: the building of bridges, not between a mainstream sociology that has frozen itself into its Durkheim-Marxian terminology, but between the different sects that developed independently, living on the wealth of ideas provided by the most important independent thinkers of our age. Such an undertaking will not be easy, given the institutional power of the dominant orthodoxy, and given the strongly self-defensive, closed character of the sects that not only try to survive the opposition of official hostility, but have also developed a strong dislike of each other as well.

Work has already started in this direction, partly by the rediscovery of half-forgotten thinkers like Simmel, Cooley, Tarde, Mannheim or Mauss, or through a new reading of classics like Weber or Pareto. Here I would only like to call attention to the strong parallels between four thinkers who should certainly be in the forefront of such an undertaking: Elias, Foucault, Voegelin and Weber.

At first glance, the list may seem surprising. It certainly cuts across the established lines of the "public" debate. One of them is a founding father (Weber), another an alleged post-modernist (Foucault); one is a self-avowed sociologist opposed to the religious reading of history (Elias), another a political philosopher interested in the history of religions and hostile to sociology (Voegelin). Some are widely known, enjoying an ambivalent fame largely based on misreading (Weber and Foucault), while others are hardly known outside the small group of devotees (Elias and Voegelin). But all

this only shows how much the current lines of the debate cannot be relied upon. What is common in all four (and others like Koselleck, Victor Turner, Mumford, Borkenau, Ariès, and others) is a relentless search for understanding our condition; a search that refuses to pay any attention to political and academic institutional hierarchies, moralising pressures, journalistic or scholarly fashions. In this undertaking, they never spared themselves. This is shown not only in the enormous workload they all carried, but also by their never having shied away from a cruel and demanding self-analysis and reflection upon their own work and self, without making an explicit and moralising programme out of it. They all managed to combine in a coherent project two concerns that seemed to be exclusive of each other: grasping the essential trends of world history covering several millennia and including different cultures and civilisations; and a self-reflexive understanding of the subjective element, always fuelling their undertaking by their personal experiences, without falling into the trap of triviality and the indecency of public confession. This linking of the "macro-macro" and the "micro-micro" gives these works a unique touch, and hints at the paradoxical possibility of a non-foundational grounding of social and political thought.

Such work could not have been accomplished with research assistants and research groups - and Elias, Foucault, Voegelin and Weber had none. It also had to be distant from the noisy debates of the public scene - and if some of them, due to their political or academic commitments and the power of their personality, at one point or another happened to come into the limelight, they soon tried to escape it. If their work attracted interest, it never fitted comfortably with the dominant intellectual mood, and was integrated only at the price of serious distortion. Their work had to be understood on its own terms, and this could only have been possible within something like a sect.

A "sectarian" attitude was indeed necessary in order to maintain and cultivate the difference these works intro-

duced. However, in this post-1989 condition, an opportunity - however slight, as one must acknowledge - has arisen for these isolated works and groups to build bridges among themselves and realise finally their inherent potential for reinvigorating social theory - by breathing new spirit into a field that, according to many, seems to be worn out and tired.

Such a building of bridges among sects, however, is bound to run into a number of difficulties. Some of these are personal. Others are due to the walls erected around the different sects that are thickest at the "hard core". This is again not surprising. It is not necessarily due to dogmatism, but to the experiential nature of the commitment, the loyalty it implies, and the difficulty to compare reading experiences with other, more causal or professional encounters. The building of bridges involves difficult decisions, like where one should open up and where should not. Connections between innovative and intellectually challenging undertakings cannot be indiscriminate, otherwise all we get is a meaningless, watered-down synthesis at the lowest common denominator. Needless to say, the task of building such bridges cannot be done in a centralised manner, following a programme, but should be a multiple and manifold effort. Such an undertaking is already under way, but it could be helped at this moment by an increased reflexivity, awareness and concentration - at least, this is what I wish to argue.

The multiplicity of efforts is not only an asset, but the only possible way such a non-synthetic undertaking can proceed. However, in order to avoid an "anything goes" attitude that would lead to a lack of seriousness, I suggest the formulation and application of one general criterion. Bridges can only be built on the basis of a degree of commonality. Now, of course, in the usual interpretation of academic freedom anybody is free to make any connections between any thinkers. This is part of the stuff of the academic game. But this is exactly a type of undertaking that all serious innovative thinkers rejected as a scholastic exercise. Moreover, it is not simply an exercise

in scholasticism. It is an abuse of the subjective position of the author. If the aim is not simply to multiply the endless series of commentaries, but to build on the works of the most innovative thinkers of our age, not simply by picking out of context some of their ideas in a positivistic-cumulative fashion but by pursuing further understanding of the problems they formulated for themselves, then the minimal degree of respect for their achievements is to take seriously the affinities they themselves felt. As is well known, modern mainstream sociology was founded on an open disrespect of this elementary fact. Durkheim and Weber, though they were exact contemporaries and knew about each other's work, yet did not feel any mutual sympathy - a fact that created quite a perplexity for those sociologists who took the trouble of not overlooking it.³

A respect for intellectual affinities does not necessarily mean that all opinions should be accepted at face value, nor that a study of direct "influences" should be the starting point of analysis. But they must be taken seriously. One should ascertain whether particular thinkers knew about each other; whether they felt any sympathy - whether such an encounter was even a genuine "experience"; and finally, if there were an indifference or even hostility, whether this fact can be explained. None of this belongs to the analysis proper, but it is a necessary clarificatory-methodological starting point for any undertaking that claims respect for thinkers, and does not start by evoking the "right" to make "free" links between any authors - like between Durkheim and Simmel, without mentioning the considerable conflict and dislike that Simmel's works encountered in Durkheimian circles.⁴

Let me close by discussing briefly a few of the more controversial links concerning the four thinkers listed. First of all, it is well known that both Elias and Voegelin were highly critical of Weber. How to eliminate this obstacle to building bridges between them and Weber? In my view, this can be done in two steps. First, one can show that in fact both Voegelin and

Elias used Weber extensively in their work, without referring specifically to him. There is nothing surprising in it, as Weber, just like Nietzsche, was such a figure of German intellectual life in the 1920s and 1930s that one could not avoid meeting and using him. Second, however, it is precisely the characteristics of the reception of Weber that can account for the hostility felt by both Voegelin and Elias - the (not completely disinterested) selling of Weber as a positivist, value-free sociologist.

It is a commonplace to state that the social sciences today suffer from a high degree of fragmentation. But such assessments are often only excuses for not doing something about the problems. It is necessary to specify the exact situation, the reasons why innovative thought has not so far succeeded in breaking through barriers. The problem is not only that the disciplines are separated and often governed by the well-known rules of an obsolete scholastic positivism, but that all innovative thinkers are marginalised and conveniently labelled within the disciplines and discourses. It is because of these double walls that the possibility of their encounter is even more diminished. Thus, Elias became an outsider in sociology, Voegelin in the history of political philosophy, Victor Turner in anthropology, while Weber was normalised as a founding father of positivist sociology and Foucault as a post-structuralist and post-modernist.

The task of building bridges among innovative sects is to reinvigorate thought by re-drawing the boundaries.

NOTES

1. See Terry N. Clark, *Prophets and Patrons: The French University and the Emergence of the Social Sciences* (Harvard University Press, 1973), especially the story of the promotion of a protégé of Durkheim, Bougé, pp. 69-71 and 177-8.
2. Jeffrey C. Alexander and Paul Colomy (eds.), *Differentiation Theory and Social Change: Comparative and Historical Perspectives* (N.Y., Columbia University Press, 1990), Introduction, p.7.
3. This seems hard to believe, but in

his 1966 article in the *European Journal of Sociology* (pp. 330-6) Edward Tyriakian claimed that he was the first to address the forgotten issue of the actual link between Weber and Durkheim. 4. This was done by Stepan Meštrović, in his anti-postmodern post-modern book *The Coming Fin de Siècle* (London Routledge, 1991).

Arpad Szakolczai
European University Institute, Florence

■ CALL FOR BOOK DONATIONS

The University of Tartu in Estonia needs books on figurational studies

In 1991, Estonia, the most northern of the three Baltic States, regained its independence from 50 years of totalitarian rule. The pace and quality of

change in post-soviet Estonia has been extraordinary. As a result, a reformed and rejuvenated country is rapidly emerging. Today, much is available, but little is in fact affordable - especially for academics and universities in general. There is tremendous interest, but many important publications are simply beyond reach. Our help is needed.

Please donate books on figurational studies - especially books by and on Elias - to the University of Tartu, the oldest and most distinguished institution of higher learning in Estonia.

Please send your donation to: Professor Thomas Salumets, Chair, Comparative Literature, University of British Columbia, 1866 Main Mall, BU E270, Vancouver, B.C., Canada V6T 1Z1.

■ RECENT CONFERENCES

■ THE CIVILISING OF THE FEMALE EGO

23-25 June 1995, Hamburg, Germany

Coinciding with what would have been Norbert Elias's 98th birthday, and billed as a very early celebration of his centenary, this conference tackled a topic which was close to Elias's heart and is also long overdue for attention in view of the wealth of feminist research in the last two decades. The conference was financially co-sponsored by the Elias Foundation. In view of its importance, we are therefore printing two comments on the conference, by Paula-Irene Villa (Ruhr-Universität Bochum), and by Oliver König (Köln).

Paula-Irene Villa:

Can women's studies profit from current sociological debates? And can - on the other side - sociological theory go on ignoring feminist studies? There seem to be certain difficulties and mutual misunderstandings between the two "worlds", so that this conference took up the task of starting a dialogue between contemporary social theory and feminist research. That was the explicit aim of Gabriele Klein and Katharina

Liebsch who organized this conference.

The high level of both the presentations and the ensuing discussions, which were characterized by a thrilling balance between empirical-historical material and theoretical thinking, were possible because of the shared basic question of this congress. Concretely this was the search for possibilities of using the sociology of Elias for current Women's and Gender Studies. This formed a common reference point, so that a real understanding and a productive climate of discussion was possible in spite of the wide range of themes and methods. As we all know, this does not always occur in sociological conferences! The opportunity for productive and intense debates was indebted last but not least to excellent organization, which managed to bring together more than 120 participants (mostly women), 16 speakers (14 women and two men) in two (sunny) days, without unexpected changes in the programme, and always with enough (free!) coffee and a friendly atmosphere.

The dense programme and discussions centred mainly on three themes: "contrasting theoretical perspectives",

"women's social history", and "internalization (or incorporation) of social order". The papers of the conference will be published next year by Suhrkamp, Frankfurt.

In the discussion about contrasting theories, the Austrian historian Ulrike Döcker could find a certain similarity between Elias and Bourdieu in their common conceptualization of the social as a network. At the time, she impressively pointed out some fundamental differences between the two theories with reference to some historical material. And she clearly argued in favour of Bourdieu's concepts of the "habitus" and the "social field", as being better able to situate women and men in their socio-historic contexts. Hilge Landweer discovered some similarities between Foucault and Elias, in their shared focus on the relations between social power and individuals. Both take their departure from a conception of individuality that is always already social, and both emphasize that processes of power make individuals into what they are. But from that point on, the differences between Elias and Foucault are striking: for Elias processes of internalization are the central mechanism of "becoming a human being in the civilization process", while for Foucault the central point is the direct impact of the social in the body ("bio-politics"). Landweer's basic thesis about current differentiation processes is that the contents of shame are changing rapidly. Thus, an uncertain fear of shame can be observed, associated with responses of embarrassment towards the experience of insecure norms.

Bärbel Meurer compared Elias with Beck, making a harsh critique of the latter. Using Elias's historical perspective, Beck is revealed as an ahistorical macro-theorist whose work rests on underlying structuralist assumptions. Here again, the importance of bringing together historical and sociological thinking, was very striking. Contrasting theoretical perspectives need to include the specific cultural and historical figurations of the people whom theories are about. This insight is crucial to researchers in women's studies, because of their refusal to accept biol-

ogical nor "natural" arguments.

Not surprisingly then, the same insight was evident in many of the papers dealing with historical evidence. The wide range of themes included: the figure of the "maitresse regnante in the court society of eighteenth century Württemberg" (S. Obwald-Bargende); "letters and femininity in the eighteenth century" (B. Niemeyer); "elements of a feminine authoritarianism: M. Weber and G. Bäumer" (U. Prokop); and "sociogenetic and psychogenetic aspects of modern marriage" (S. Ernst). All these themes were used to show in a constructive but critical manner the advantages and limitations of Norbert Elias's theory of civilising processes. In general terms, Elias's perspective was shown to be useful for women's and gender history if it is used in a creative and undogmatic matter (which surely is in the spirit of Elias himself). His insights into the historical and processual character of complex social relations help to make clear that these are not fixed and "natural", but possess potential for change - an insight which is a crucial ambition of academic feminism. Still, as Annette Treibel sharply pointed out in her closing lecture, the insights and concepts of Elias's theory need to be "connected to other theoretical concepts of feminist social sciences". She impressively did it herself, linking the concept of power-balance to feminist analysis of modern institutions.

Obviously, at the end of this congress, there still remained a need for much further discussion about possible linkages between feminist research and contemporary social theory. It must involve not only the recent reception of Elias's sociology, but also refer to other current theorists. So more meetings like this are needed, and we hope that they will in due course be arranged.

Oliver König:

The title of the conference, remarked one participant, had not been very fittingly chosen, because the "Ego" in the Freudian sense already represented the civilised. None the less, it very well represented the intentions of the two organisers from the Hamburg Institute of Sociology, Gabriele Klein and Katharine Liebsch, which was to

bring together two different circles of the academic community - feminist studies on the one hand and figurational sociology in the tradition of Norbert Elias on the other. There thus came together two academic circles who both have a tendency to see themselves as outsiders among the established. They also share another similarity, in that even though they both explicitly take an interdisciplinary approach, they tend rather to keep themselves to themselves.

This was already obvious if one compared the Hamburg conference with the earlier conference held at Essen University in 1991, organised by the Elias circle just a year after Elias's death (for a report of that conference, see the *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie*, 1992, p. 188 ff.). While the Elias conference in 1991 had been male dominated in a very traditional academic way, the Hamburg conference was female dominated. Among the 100 participants there were only five men, including two speakers (both from another European countries) - even though all the Essen participants had been invited. Seen from the viewpoint of figurational sociology, one could argue that internal differentiation will continue among outsiders too, following Elias's principle that "The doors below must remain shut. Those above must open" (*The Civilising Process*, 1994 ed., p. 16). Not even the Hamburg sociologists showed up. In Austria, this would not be possible, remarked Gerhard Fröhlich from Linz - the local colleagues would turn up if only out of politeness. So the attempt to break down the barriers between different academic circles was only partly successful. But it was a most interesting meeting none the less.

The conference began on the Friday evening with the official opening, followed by a lecture by Claudia Oppitz (Basle, Switzerland), on "Women and Gender Relations in Norbert Elias's *Die höfische Gesellschaft*". I arrived too late to report on this.

The Saturday programme, morning and afternoon, was organised in two parallel sessions, with 2-3 papers in each having a common focus. Thanks

to this agreeable timetable, one was not confronted with the breathless 20-minute sprints so often witnessed at other sociological conferences. There was more than an hour for each lecture and the consequent discussion. It was also a great advantage that most of the speakers stayed for the whole conference and did not race to the railway station immediately after their presentation. So in discussions it was possible to make connections between the different contributions.

The focus of one Saturday-morning session was "Customs, Rules, Positions", with papers about the courtly mistress (Sybille Obwald-Bargende, Stuttgart); about moral philosophy in letters of the eighteenth century (Beatrix Niemeyer, Kiel), and about the history of the civilising of eating habits as an expression of gender relations (Elisabeth Meyer-Renschhausen, Berlin).

In the parallel session focusing on "Body, Movement, Sexuality", Gertrud Pfister (Berlin) spoke about the importance of sports as an expression of the liberation of the female body as well as of the internalisation of constraints. Using Elias's concept of power-balance, Cas Wouters (Amsterdam/Utrecht) spoke about "The Lust-Balance of Sex and Love" - how the sexual liberation of the 1960s can be brought together with the search for lasting emotional ties and relationships, or rather how the balance between the two changes over time. Uta Ottmüller (Berlin), who has left the academic life to take up practical (body)work, gave a lecture about "Body Language and Body Work - Self-Restraint and Self-Liberation of Women?", which unintentionally showed the problematic gap between (body)practice and theory. While academic discourse is very often cut off from social "reality", the practical field tends to be speechless or subject to the linguistic rituals of theory - in neither case providing either contrasts or communication between the two worlds.

Saturday afternoon sessions focused on "Marriage and the Family" and "Identity and Authority". Ulrike Prokop (Marburg) spoke about "Elements

of Female Authoritarianism", using the work of two important figures in the middle-class feminist movement, Gertrud Bäumer and Marianne Weber, which led to quite some protest in the discussion. Even though Ulrike Prokop did not mention Elias explicitly, at this point the explosive potential of his concept of power-balance for women's and gender studies became quite obvious. To talk about a power-balance will enable us to differentiate between more and less power, but it also leads to the recognition that there is no figurational position entirely devoid of power - and thus automatically leads on to the possibility not only of male but also of female authoritarianism. This was followed by a paper about "Feminist Identity Politics" by Susanne Maurer (Tübingen), but I took myself off to the parallel session about "Marriage and the Family", where after a lecture about "Generative Patterns in the Civilising Process" there followed another contribution to the power debate. Using very interesting material from manners books and law, Stefanie Ernst (Münster) spoke about bourgeois marriage in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In this presentation, one problem stood out quite clearly that was also characteristic of most of the other papers too: the question of the connection between social (and theoretical) discourse on the one hand and social practice on the other was not even asked in most of the cases. Caught between construction and deconstruction, between "negative" images of the past and "positive" pictures of the future, gender studies are in danger of losing their object. For example, in the micro-analysis of power in marriage, it is not very wise to confound the chauvinist male discourse with what actually happens inside families. For this, psychodynamic and psychotherapeutic concepts, especially from the field of family therapy, would widen the perspective for feminist studies as well as for mainstream sociology.

Sunday morning sessions were devoted to the comparison of sociological theory. Focusing on "Disciplinary Process and Individualising Process", Elias was compared with Foucault (Hilge Landwehr, Berlin) and Ulrich Beck (Bärbel Meurer,

Bielefeld). The parallel session about "Incorporation and Social Order" was dedicated to the comparison of Norbert Elias and Pierre Bourdieu, whose complex analysis of culture and power relations is a challenge for feminist studies. Gerhard Fröhlich (Linz, Austria) and Ulrike Döcker (Vienna) both dealt with the value and limits of Elias's and Bourdieu's concepts for gender studies. Besides Elias's concept of power-balance, there are in particular Bourdieu's concepts of habitus as an incorporated structure, of the agglomeration of different sorts of capital, and of the dynamic field in which the social distinctions are enacted. Both authors, in contrast to most of "classical" sociology, give much attention to the bodily structure of society; this leads them, much more readily than do other theoretical conceptions, into the analysis of gender relations. Even though, for both of them, gender issues are still somewhat secondary conflicts, the complexity of Bourdieu's conception in particular should be developed and used fruitfully, rather than denounced for its male bias (which can of course be detected). Ulrike Döcker did both, showing that in Bourdieu's ethnographic studies of Kabyl society - which he himself sees as the basis for his ethno-sociology of France, the female part of this world is not represented. Bourdieu's theory of practice would therefore be only a partial (male) objectivation, awaiting its female completion.

In the final lecture of the conference, Annette Treibel (Bochum) again pointed out the explosive effect of the theory of power-balances, as the idea suggests a kind of (moving, stable or unstable) equilibrium, which feminist studies in particular reject. Taken seriously, the concept of power-balance, and similar ideas of Bourdieu's, lead to the question of female participation in "Herrschaft". In comparison, the theory of female participation ("Mittäterschaft") formulated by Christina Thürmer-Rohr, to which Annette Treibel referred at this point, falls short of this, by splitting up the destructive aspects and projecting them on men in general, thereby generating a kind of seduction theory. The difficult relationship between feminist studies and Elias - between *involvement* and *de-*

tachment - became clear in still another way. Treibel pointed out that affective involvement without the sweat of academic research does not get very far. She also pointed out the tendency, evident in most of the contributions to this conference, to be preoccupied with social discourse and thus to lose contact with social practice (in Bourdieu's sense). She expressed this using the ideas of figurational ideal and figurational reality. Between gender utopias and female identity politics, social "reality" is in danger of disappearing - as indeed is sociology as a "reality" science (*Wirklichkeitswissenschaft*). Too much utopia, too much focus on figurational ideals, makes it more difficult to gain a clear view of identity stress in both female and male life courses. Treibel also pointed out the exaggerated distinction between Women's Studies and the Women's Movement, which grew out of the struggle for academic acceptance. The balance between involvement and detachment, between political action, personal affection and sociological analysis, has to be restored over and over again. At the end of Treibel's lecture, the pendulum swung again to the side of involvement and solidarity among women. Identity politics won over against a more detached sociological point of view in the style of Elias, where the emphasis is more on the unplanned results of intentional activities.

In the final plenary session, the remaining participants all shared the wish for another conference of this kind. It would be well worth it.

■ THE HEADY WINE OF POST-MODERNISM

Report on the Second Theory, Culture and Society Conference 'Culture and Identity: City, Nation, World', Hilton Hotel, Berlin, 10-14 August 1995

These are a few personal impressions. If attendance alone is anything to go by, this exhilarating conference was hugely successful. The final list of participants ran to over 500. To bring myself down to earth, I did a simple numerical exercise on this list and found that the participants came from

thirty-two different countries, the most numerous provenances being the United Kingdom (129), Germany (103), USA (44) and Australia (30), and every continent.

The conference attracted people from 'cultural studies' as well as sociologists as such. I was struck by how far this form of radicalism has come to pervade the study of social life at the present time. It was reflected in many of the papers. The terms 'discourse' or 'discourses' were practically obligatory. Cultural studies has transcended disciplinary boundaries, which is to be welcomed, but in other ways it has exacted a high price.

Many abstracts were so clogged with post-structuralist jargon that they creaked on the edge of intelligibility. Buzzwords and neologisms abounded: hybridity, creolization, Alterity, hyper-commodification, hyper-aestheticised, mediascape, ghetto-centricity, labialization, minoriticism, de-hegemonization, deparadoxization, euphemization, telematic territory, mélange modernities, transculturality, spatial semiosis, differencing, ethnification, digital personalities, cyborgs, multi-culturalism and a whole range of terms utilizing the prefix 'cyber', as in cyber-space/punk/psychology/discourse/feminist/democracy/rights.

Lacking the relative detachment that sociology properly done can provide, the writers of many of the papers struck me as simply drunk on the heady wine of post-modernism. One abstract burbled: 'We live in a world experienced through the synaesthesia of cybernetic, visual, tactile and digital formations where "desire" cannot be positioned ... within the confines of psychoanalytical paradigms such as the "unconscious" alone, nor within the molecular politics of desire...' etc. etc..

For me, as a naïve *flâneur* of the figurationalist persuasion, with empirical tendencies, this was all too much. Many papers were on fascinating subjects and by well-intentioned authors, but somehow lacked a sense of social structure, power and process, as well as systematic empirical backing. Many took as given sweeping changes

in identity formation, the reflexivity of the self and the blurring of gender boundaries, all assumed to have been brought about by global hyper-commodification (apparently the highest stage of consumerism), the Internet, virtual reality technology and satellite TV. With no evidence cited, one abstract stated indiscriminately, as a matter of fact, that 'internally cultures today are determined by a pluralization of identities' and another assured us that 'computer cross-dressing' was being engaged in 'unsupervised everywhere'. Whatever the extent of this latter development might be, its significance was unclear -- at least to me.

In fairness, some papers did discuss the empirical evidence which might bear on the extent of these changes and their actual as opposed to projected impact, but overall these were few, as far as I could see. (Richard Sennett's plenary lecture 'Work and Place' was one of the exceptions.) By and large there was often no expressed intention even to nod in this direction. It was apparently just a matter of exchanging different stories, or 'narratives', or perhaps taking one or two films as evidence alone of massive changes of consciousness and sensibility across whole nations, regions and even across the world. These were then taken to be changes of such profundity that they entailed jettisoning the whole of sociology and the antinomies of the Western intellectual tradition generally, which had been historically superseded by the advent of virtual reality and cyberspace. It was the politics that was supposed to be implied in these developments that was very much to the fore. One author said that he situated himself 'within the discourse of critical or insurgent multiculturalism', which summed up a common stance.

However, not every speaker was completely carried away with it all. In the Abstracts I did find some more sceptical and realistic sociological voices: Mart-Jan de Jong declared that 'at an ideological level multiculturalism is a good thing ... [but] ... this whole idea seems to ignore what we know about integration and socialization processes'. Rod Aya concluded that 'universal, objective knowledge is the social

fact of modern life: cultural relativism is pinchbeck re-enchantment'. Anyone who knows the work of Norbert Elias would have welcomed Guy Rundle's realization that 'a theoretical approach which emphasises the relations between the cultural and natural "levels" of existence ... is now becoming necessary'. And Peter Wagner made the important sociological corrective to the post-modernist overstatements about the total flux of contemporary life: '...It will be proposed here to seriously conceptualize the kind of social linkages that may be stable, extended and create collectivities as compared to others that tend to remain fluid, narrowly confined and changing between persons'.

The papers that I know of which drew on Elias directly or integrated the figurational approach with other perspectives, are listed below, some of them with abstracts. (These are not subject to my earlier criticisms!)

Johann Arnason (La Trobe): *Culture and Civilization after Communism*.

The rise and fall of "really existing socialism" was undoubtedly the crucial historical experience of this century, but there has been surprisingly little discussion of its implications for the basic questions of social theory. This paper dealt with the twin concepts of culture and civilisation and the need to rethink their meaning in the light of the Soviet experience. Elias's account of the distinction between culture and civilization served as a starting point: as he shows, it can be understood as a response to problems and tensions that emerge in the course of the civilising process. This idea should, however, be developed in a less reductionistic way than Elias did, i.e. with a stronger emphasis on the autonomy and formative as well as transformative role of the cultural context. From this point of view, the most salient features of the Soviet experience have to do with a totalised civilising process (this perspective may throw some light on the question of totalitarianism), and with the counter-currents it provoked. The long-term result was a culturally dislocated and vulnerable society; the key role of this factor in the downfall of the Soviet model was discussed and linked to the problematic of nationhood and nationalism

in a post-Communist world.

Ian Burkitt (Bradford): *Modernity, Reflexivity and Embodiment*.

Through an analysis of themes in the work of Elias and Giddens, this paper set out the notion that the radical doubt and critical reflexivity engendered by modernity creates a new experience of identity and embodiment for humans. Demand for greater foresight and reflexive monitoring of action opens up a space in which a controlling "mind" is felt to govern, steer, or master the body. It is in this experience, emerging at a particular time and place, that we find the source of the Cartesian dualism. This feeling is accentuated by the increasingly mediated nature of experience in modernity where, as Lefèbvre pointed out, signs begin to lose referentials and the powers of reflexivity formed in symbolic systems appear to float free of corporeal presences and relations. Criticism was levelled at Baudrillard's notion that we are in an age of simulation where the body has come to an end, and also at ideas within theories of cyberspace which claim the body is increasingly absorbed by technology. Instead, it was argued that we are still within the bounds of modernity and that the body is of central importance as a base for reflexivity and the production and reproduction of signs and social relations. Yet it was suggested that modern identity continues to be marked by the Cartesian division and dominated by an instrumental relation between mind and body (especially for men). In the social sciences, though, we must begin to think of ways out of these conceptual dualisms and place the body at the centre of reflexive self-identity in modernity.

Pasi Falk (Helsinki): *Sociologizing and Psychologizing Anorexia Nervosa*.

We hope to carry a note on Pasi Falk's book *The Consuming Body* (London, Sage, 1994,) in *Figurations 5*.

Monica Greco (E.U.I. Florence): *The Historicity of Subjectivity and Psychosomatic Illness as a Modern Form of Experience*.

This paper examined how the emergence of psychosomatic illness as a problem for thought can be related to an historically-specific organisation of subjective experience. It compared the

theoretical vocabularies of Norbert Elias and Michel Foucault to account for the historical constitution of Western subjectivity and, particularly for the modern perception of the self as containing a "hidden truth" testifying to what is unique about each individual. From Elias's theory of civilising processes we may derive an account of the socio-cultural specificity of psychosomatic illness, understood as the equivalent of an "ascetic price" modern subjects pay in order to be civilised. Foucault's late approach to the question of subjectivity, through the notion of "technologies of the self", informed by games of truth, allows us to account for the conditions of the emergence of the problem of psychosomatic illness partly as an effect of a "will to self-revelation" developed historically in connection with the practices of Christianity. The metaphor of *homo clausus*, searching for its ever-hidden truth, itself substantiates the possibility of ascribing to value to bodily symptoms as the effects of a compromise made by each individual in favour of civilised existence.

Lauren Langman (Loyola): Bakhtin the Future: *On the End of the Nation State and the Rise of the New Feudalism: Let's Get it Right This Time*.

Stephen Mennell (Univ. College Dublin): *The American Civilizing Process*.

Why has the work of Norbert Elias attracted so little attention among American social scientists? Part of the answer is that Elias drew so much on specifically European history and culture, and the long-established sense of American particularism makes that appear irrelevant to many Americans. Following the plan of *The Civilising Process*, this paper showed, first, how Americans had followed and contributed to European debates about "civilisation" and "culture" from the earliest stages, and how a differentiated notion of "American Civilisation" had emerged. A discussion of the development of American manners followed, drawing on sources from de Tocqueville through Arthur M. Schlesinger Sr to Peter Stearns' recent book *American Cool*. Again, there

were many resemblances to European patterns, but with leads as well as lags contributing a distinct flavour to American habitus. Finally, American state-formation was less different from European models than traditional though now outdated narratives suggested; the USA was to a great extent a conquest state. The famous "frontier thesis" of Frederick Jackson Turner was re-examined for its insights into the formation of American habitus.

Chris Shilling (Southampton): *Embodiment, Auto/Biography and Cognitive Apprehension: Protestantism, Modernity and the Hyperreflective Self.*

Intended to contribute towards the construction of a an historical sociology of the body, this paper used the subject of autobiography to oppose the "turn to textuality" in the social sciences with an alternative "turn to corporeality". It began by developing Norbert Elias's concept of "symbol emancipation" in order to examine the relationships between texts, reflexivity and modes of bodily being-in-the-world, and suggested that cultural phenomena can only be understood fully by locating them within specific corporeal contexts. The argument developed through a substantive focus on the relationship between hagiographies and medieval bodies on the one hand, and autobiographies and (high) modern bodies on the other. This permitted the charting of a relationship between religious and cultural templates, historical epochs and carnal/cognitive ways of knowing the self and society, and it was suggested that the "unfinishedness" of human embodiment has become a particular existential problem in the contemporary West.

Efrat Tseëlon (Leeds Metropolitan): *Female Sartorial Identity and the Leisure-Work Distinction*

Organised capitalism in the nineteenth century was associated with the emergence of separate spheres of home vs. work and work vs. leisure, and the centrality of clock time saw redefinitions of social time.

In the sartorial world, this was echoed in two parallel developments: increased decorativeness of female fashions alongside increased sobriety

of male fashions (sharply contrasted in the advent of uniform); and the development of clearly outlined wardrobes for different activities and different times of the day.

Reasons for these developments include a resurgence of the bourgeois ideal of domestic femininity, and an explanation was offered through a combination of psychodynamic theory and the theory of civilising processes.

How valid is the work/leisure distinction today? The most closely marked boundaries still exist in organised leisure activities (such as certain sports). But when less formalised forms of leisure - which particularly characterise women's leisure patterns - as well as leisure experience and leisure attire are considered, the distinction between work and leisure similarly disintegrates.

Vadim Volkov (European University, St Petersburg): *The Stalinist Concept of "Culturedness": The Non-Violent Forms of Discipline in the Years of the "Great Terror"*.

This paper discussed the pragmatic aspects of the concept of culture and interpreted everyday cultural practices as non-violent disciplinary techniques (or forms of self-discipline). The model case is Stalinist Russia between 1936 and 1938, the years of the Great Terror. The paper focused on the cultural alternatives to terror, and argued that its social significance was overestimated. One of the functional alternatives to violence was the complex of individual practices associated with the concept of "culturedness" (*kulturnost*) prevalent in these years. The social and individual effects of "the acquisition of culturedness" - the author departed from his written text to speak provocatively of "the Stalinist civilising process" - were discussed in connection with the privatisation of life in Stalinist Russia.

Hans-Peter Waldhoff & Dursun Tun (Hannover): *On Turko-German Culture and Its Intellectual Reformulation.*

A note on Waldhoff's book *Fremde und Zivilisation* will appear in *Figurations* 5.

Cas Wouters (Utrecht): *Changes in the Lust Balance: Love and Sex since the Sexual Revolution.*

See abstract in *Figurations* 3.

Richard Kilminster
University of Leeds

■ TANGO CONFERENCE

On Saturday, 3 June 1995, a stimulating and animated seminar took place at the Latin American Centre, St Antony's College, Oxford, on the topic of 'Tango and Bolero in the Musical Culture of Latin America'. The thrust of papers was socio-historical, with ample opportunity to consider a range of recorded sounds from past and present. From some settings we were able to apprehend the transitions from sinewy-textured intimate-scale ad hoc groups of local musicians to standardized ensembles and performance routines preferred by broadcasters and the recording industry.

This well-attended event was organised and hosted by José Estebán Castro with the support of the Latin American Centre, and also of St Antony's College Inter-Faculty Committee for Latin American Studies, Oxford Argentine Student Association, Oxford Mexican Society, Oxford University Brazilian Society, and with the special sponsorship of the British Council, Mexico, the Embassy of the Argentine Republic, and the Embassy of Mexico.

Sessions were chaired by Malcolm Deas of the Latin American Centre. With magisterial firmness and good-natured asides he presided over three substantial presentations:

1. 'Models of masculinity in the poetics of Argentinian tango' (Eduardo Archetti, Department and Museum of Anthropology, University of Oslo);
2. 'The fancy of a chimera: a bolero series' (Carlos Monsiváis - Chronicler of Contemporary Mexico);
3. 'The tango: from its origins to worldwide triumph, 1880-1925' (Simon Collier, Centre for Latin American and Iberian Studies, Vanderbilt University).

Paul Nixon and Ann Buckley participated as invited respondents, specifically to introduce the theoretical perspectives of Figural Sociology,

and to explore - instantum - the explanatory usefulness of a social-psychological, processual approach to specific mimetic, symbol-laden data.

The seminar took place before a packed audience, some of whose members had much to offer to the discussion from recollections of family settings and attitudes of a generation or two ago. After dinner the gathered company was instructed in the basics of tango, following which conviviality continued into the small hours, to the accompaniment of some excellent bands.

Congratulations are due to José Estebán Castro and his well-organised colleagues for managing an excellent and inspiring event. Sponsors should be well pleased; hopefully they may be encouraged to support other such imaginative ventures mapping the spectrum of human engagement in music-making, dance, muscular and emotional bonding, sport, games, and the social processes of which they are index. As many would concede, such an approach is more challenging than atomising segmentations of cultural artifacts which can of course readily be objectified, held up for non-explanatory praise or closures of dispraise as they are severed from the human beings who shape them. On this occasion, and particularly from Simon Collier's context-sensitive appraisals, attempts to 'only connect' yielded substantial empirical riches as well as deepening our understanding of how much there is yet to be explored on Tango from sociological perspectives.

Paul Nixon and Ann Buckley
University of Cambridge

■ FORTHCOMING CONFERENCES

Masquerade and Gendered Identity. Venice, 21-24 February 1996 (back-to-back with the Venice Carnival). Further details from, and 500-word abstracts to, the organiser:
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Social Science History Association 20th Annual Conference

Chicago, Palmer House, 16-19 November 1995.

At this year's SSHA conference, one of the Presidential Sessions is to be devoted to "The Elias Paradigm and Social Science History". Subjects of Presidential sessions are chosen specifically because they "cut across disciplinary lines and involve many colleagues from outside the United States.

News of this reached us just too late to be included in *Figurations* 3, and will reach readers too late for them to attend. But we hope to have a report of the Chicago conference by Pieter Spierenburg in *Figurations* 5.

Memory, History and Critique: European Identity at the Millennium

University of Humanist Studies, Utrecht, 19-24 August 1996. Fifth conference of the International Society for the Study of European Ideas.

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■ RECENT BOOKS

Efrat Tseëlon, *The Masque of Femininity*. London, Sage, 1995. ISBN: 0-8039-8807-9 (Pbk)

Drawing on a wide range of theory, empirical sources and original research, Tseëlon examines the role of the visual - fashions, the body, and personal appearance - in defining the female self. She develops a set of key concepts in understanding the meaning of the female presence: modesty, duplicity, beauty, seduction and death. She sheds new light on such topics as religious constructions of women, the power of the prostitute

metaphor, the female gaze and the question of cosmetic surgery. The book demonstrates how normative conceptions of feminine essence, which have endured from Eve to Madonna, become the requirements of appearance for women. Drawing on the theories of Elias, Freud, Lacan, Goffman, Ariès and Baudrillard, Tseëlon highlights the paradoxical nature of these expectations which ground the contemporary feminine experience in the West.

[Publisher's abstract]

Mart Bax, *Medjugorje: Religion, Politics and Violence in Rural Bosnia*. Amsterdam, Vrij Universiteit Press. 140 pp. Dfl 32.50.

Medjugorje, fifteen years ago an out-of-the-way peasant village in Bosnia Hercegovina, is today a Marian devotion centre of global repute. On the basis of many years of fieldwork in the region, the author gives a detailed account of that transformation process, in which religion, politics and violence are closely intertwined. Adopting a long-term historical approach, the description also opens up surprisingly new perspectives on today's problems and atrocities in Bosnia Hercegovina. The book is also an interesting ethnographic contribution to the current debate on civilising and decivilising processes.

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■ BIBLIOGRAPHICAL RETROSPECT

In this section, we include books which are not very recent, but which may not be very well-known to readers in the English-speaking world. I shall be pleased selectively to publish a few such summaries in future issues of *Figurations*. Authors should contact me before sending material. - SJM

Elias in the Age of the Smart Machine

One does not normally associate Norbert Elias with questions relating to the emergence of new technologies and the future of working life. Nor does he feature prominently, yet, in the sociological study of social organization/s.¹ Yet he has been pressed into precisely such service by a historian of work in a book whose reputation has been steadily on the increase over the last seven years and which deserves to be brought to the attention of figurational studies scholars, Shoshana Zuboff's *In the Age of the Smart Machine: The Future of Work and Power* (Oxford, Heinemann, 1988).²

Zuboff's problem has to do with the changes not only in the social organization of work but also in the dispositions to work, the mastery of the skills of body and mind, that are attendant upon the introduction of information technology and telecommunications (IT&T) in the contemporary workplace. Of major significance for her is that IT&T are considered to be "clean" or "hygienic" or "sanitized" technologies, maximally distanced from the animality of the body which is employed directly in all forms of physical labour. Her problem is to situate this development in the context of the enduring relationship between the "universality of social hierarchy" and the fact that "physical labor is everywhere considered to constitute its lowest echelons". The "repugnance towards labour rides a long wave in Western history" (p.25) She thus attempts to delineate the outlines of a dynamic of distantiation from the work of the body, a dynamic with which the drive towards "new technology" is complexly articulated.

"The close relationship between the rejection of animality and the progress of civilization is at the heart of our modern conception of work." (p.30)

Zuboff focuses on the "texture of human experience - what people say, feel, and do - in dealing with the technological changes that imbue their immediate environment." (p.12) In par-

ticular, she is concerned to trace the changing sensibilities of mind and body of workers as they go through periods of rapid change in the technology of production e.g. what Bourdieu and Elias would call changes in *habitus*. She is attempting to study major technological change from the 'inside-out so to speak but with sociological we-perspectives very much in mind.

This book has been acclaimed by scholars of diverse persuasions. Bafflingly, frustratingly and incomprehensibly this seven year-old tome, recommended reading I am sure on many under-graduate and postgraduate courses on organizational sociology, is out of print. There are no plans for a reprint. Which prompts me to ask, speaking of new technologies, is it not time for a review of the means whereby scholarly works are made available? It strikes me that the publishing industry is no longer up to the needs of the academy in its current state of accelerated growth.

Notes

1. Although see the following: "Organizations can be seen as probably the most important example of a 'figuration', which makes it possible to think 'of people as individuals at the same time as thinking of them as societies' (Elias, *What is Sociology?*, 1978: 129)" - Göran Ahrne, *Social Organizations: Interaction inside, outside and between organizations*. London, Sage, 1994, p.3.

2. Zuboff quotes Elias extensively in her first chapter. She refers to Elias's "pathbreaking analysis" (p. 26).

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Reinhard Blomert, *Psyche und Zivilisation: Zur theoretischen Konstruktion bei Norbert Elias*. Lit Verlag, 1991.

This book deals with the theoretical implications of the specific connection of sociology and psychoanalysis in the work of Norbert Elias, and with his conception of rationality. During the

1920s and 1930s, psychoanalytic knowledge was integrated into the corpus of the new science of sociology in three different ways. There was the so-called "Frankfurt School", whose work was revived after the end of the Hitler period and became famous through the student movement of the 1960s. There was the approach of Talcott Parsons, who studied in Heidelberg during the period when Elias taught there. Parsons built up a social system theory which included Freudian knowledge, but referred back particularly to the sociology of Max Weber, to which he felt deeply indebted through his connection with Heidelberg. These two ways of integrating psychoanalysis and sociology differ from the Eliasian approach in lacking an historical dimension.

All the historical material found in the works of Freud deals with more or less fictive societies or ethnological material. Fictive historical personalities are analysed, but not individuals in their social location. They are artificial constructs, serving merely to illustrate their own problems. Only the Eliasian approach to integrating psychoanalysis into sociological knowledge is based on a broad historical background.

The first chapter of Blomert's book discusses Elias's early attempt, in *Über den Prozeß der Zivilisation* in 1939, to use psychoanalytic terminology in a very specific way, which differs markedly from Freudian usage.

The second chapter is dedicated to Freudian psychoanalysis as developed in the group analysis of S.H. Foulkes, an approach which has thrown overboard the idea of the individual as central to therapeutic concern and given a central place to the group as matrix of inter-individual relations. The concept of human beings as interpersonal elements of networks is central not only to Eliasian sociology but also - through Elias's influence as a founder member of the Group Analytic Society - to the basic conception of group analysis. The third chapter shows the development of terminology in the works of Elias up to his later texts. It discusses his co-operation with the Group Analytic Society,

and demonstrates that Elias never abandoned his search for improvements in his terminology.

The last chapter gives an overview of the development of the concept of rationality from Max Weber to Norbert Elias, where the integration of psychoanalytic knowledge plays a big role. Rationality and irrationality are two static concepts, images of thinking stemming from the philosophical heritage. For human figurations this opposition does not work. As Freud claimed, irrationality - as far as it concerns the emotions as a natural and necessary dimension of all human relations, including the scientific world - can be detected, but we err if we attempt to try to neglect it. So the role of emotionality is crucial to any sociological concept of rationality. Elias, who was formed as a sociologist in the Weberian atmosphere of Heidelberg, is the leader of this development - a development which stretches from Max Weber's resistance to all psychological or psychoanalytic knowledge, through the partial integration of psychoanalysis and sociology by Karl Mannheim in his British period, up to the specific and well-founded approach to integration pursued by Norbert Elias.

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Johann P. Arnason, *The Future that Failed: Origins and Destinies of the Soviet Model*. London, Routledge, 1993.

This book deals with the rise, expansion and demise of Communism as a regime rather than as a movement or ideology. The main focus is on the power structure that took shape in Russia after the 1917 revolutions; their historical origins are explained at some length, and their internal dynamics are analysed in terms of changing relationships between economic, political and cultural patterns. The original Soviet model is compared with its most significant variants, especially the Chinese one. Finally, the generally crisis of Soviet-type regimes is discussed in a broader his-

torical context: as the decomposition of a temporarily successful counter-paradigm of modernity.

It is the first part of the book that is most directly linked to Elias's work and the comparative perspectives that can be derived from it. The historical sources of the Soviet phenomenon include developmental models and revolutionary visions of Western origin, but the impact of these factors can only be understood in conjunction with the legacy of pre-revolutionary state-formation and imperial expansion. The discussion of this background is - to the author's best knowledge - the first attempt to apply Elias's theory of state-formation to the Russian case. A key thesis is that in comparison with the West, the Russian state-building process "takes off from a less developed basis and goes to more extreme lengths; in Elias's terms, it can perhaps be described as a more comprehensive monopolisation of more limited resources" (p. 37). The long-term implications of this pattern are crucial to the whole later trajectory of imperial and revolutionary modernisation.

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Simonetta Tabboni, *Norbert Elias: Un ritratto intellettuale*. Bologna: Il Mulino 1993. ISBN: 88-15-04215-6. Pages 310. Price: L. 36.000.

As its subtitle states the book aims at providing an intellectual portrait of Norbert Elias. Quite consistently then the whole structure of the book is designed to fulfil such a goal: whereas the first part consists of a single chapter devoted to Elias' biography, the second one includes six chapters. Each chapter is in turn devoted to some crucial concepts in Elias' figurational sociology as well as to their implementation in empirical research. Thus Chapter II focuses on the concept violence and relates it to the alternative societal patterns of *Kultur* and *Zivilisation*, which are in turn connected to his analysis of both German national identity and political terrorism. An

epistemological appraisal of figurational sociology is undertaken in the next chapter where its implications for historical sociology as well as for empirical social research are also attentively considered. The concept of process and its role in leading sociological theory to a much more developmental-oriented framework are dealt with in Chapter IV. The next chapter focuses on sports and leisure as processes, whereas Chapter VI considers how the very concept of process affects the way of conceiving of a post-empiricist oriented sociology of knowledge. The ending chapter takes eventually under review the intellectual affiliations, the criticisms and the possible developments within and without such a theoretical framework.

In the introduction, Simonetta Tabboni, who for more than a decade has been extensively using Elias's concepts to guide research in both historical and theoretical sociology, states that she quite often met him in Amsterdam and discussed the outline of the book with him. She also reports that Elias tended to become more and more distanced as the focus of these conversations shifted from theoretical concerns to more biographical questions (see pp. 25-6). That is possibly why she appears not to have fully exploited perhaps precious first-hand material stemming from her own conversations with the German sociologist in Amsterdam, relying instead on other already published interviews with him. Whatever the reason, this option seems to have weakened the author's own intention of portraying Elias as an outstanding figure in a fully modern sociology rather than as a somewhat eccentric epigone of classical early-modern social theory. In fact, though sharing Dirk Käsler's estimate of Elias as a "twenty-first-century sociologist", Simonetta Tabboni doesn't provide full evidence for such a claim.

This lack is evident throughout the book, but particularly when the issue of the status of human knowledge is addressed. According to Elias it is pointless to view knowledge other than in terms of a social process. For the author, that is enough to justify speaking of Elias's as a post-empiric-

ist epistemological stance in line with Kuhn's. But it could be argued that it is necessary at least to highlight differences between that and the German tradition of the sociology of knowledge, to which Elias is indeed profoundly indebted, and then to compare the scope of his epistemology in the light of the recent developments in social constructionism. Furthermore, to assess the extent to which a set of basic concepts, not to mention a theory, belongs to the core of a discipline, it might be useful to find out how capable these concepts are of establishing connections with others within the boundaries of a given discursive space; the book on the contrary takes up this attitude only occasionally. That is particularly striking in the light of the peculiar story which eventually led to Norbert Elias's becoming a classic within the social sciences. While tending to emphasise his role as an outsider, stressing in this case a supposed correspondence between life and theory, an analysis of the circumstances which from the late 1970s helped Elias achieve a more established position in contemporary sociology is almost completely missing. Nothing for instance is said about Elias's own attempt at transforming *Über den Prozess der Zivilisation* into a sound critique of Parsons's general theory in the preface to the new edition of the book in 1968. Nor is there any mention of the impact of French authors like Ariès and Foucault in previously shaping a discursive space in which any attempt at understanding modernity in terms of a coupling of objectification and disciplining subjectivity, and increasing individualisation, might have gained relevance. Sharing Helga Nowotny's opinion that Elias's theory of civilising processes presents a case for an epistemic turn in the social sciences, Simonetta Tabboni not only stresses how critical Elias was about some of the traditional sociological distinctions - individual vs. society, nature vs. culture, micro vs. macro - but also gives a positive assessment of his own attempt at re-or-

ganising the set of basic concepts of sociology. To appraise the scope of figurational sociology in overcoming such distinctions and providing a theoretical framework which emphasises the mutual dependence of individual and society, subjectivity and structure, is indeed one of the author's main concerns. None the less, little effort is made to compare Elias' own proposal with both classical sociological theories and contemporary ones. Quite surprisingly, there is no mention of Michel Foucault, whose own understanding of Western civilisation aimed at overcoming metaphysical notions of power and freedom was in line with Elias's, inasmuch as they both worked out a definition of these concepts in terms of relations rather than properties possessed by some groups and individuals but not others. This omission is hard to understand in the light of the fact that, for more than a decade, both post-structuralists and figurational sociologists have considered the two theories to be partly overlapping at least as far as the link between the state formation and the development of self-constraint in the modern discourse of subjectivity is concerned.

Bringing history back in has been one of the crucial assets of Elias's contribution, particularly during his late reception in sociological discourse when, in the wake of the decline of Parsonian grand theory, the discipline abandoned its tendency to consider theory in the context of short-term contemporary trends and started thinking in the context of long-term historical processes which have culminated in a single global society in the twentieth century. This is not to say that figurational sociology gave up any orientation towards the present in terms of stimulating empirical social research, as the author shows when attentively reporting later developments in the study of neighbourhood relations, sports and leisure, and in cultural studies. Basically, the figurational approach called for a deeper consideration of the non-intentional ordered-

ness of social interdependencies which is embedded in historical development, and it worked out a set of theoretical tools to conceive of historical dynamics. Unfortunately in the book little attention is paid to comparing figurational sociology with other attempts at coming to terms with history; it might have been interesting to discover to what extent Elias' own proposal differs from neo-Weberian theories of historical development, or from neo-evolutionary system theory, which also merits a serious confrontation with figurational sociology.

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■ CONTRIBUTIONS

The next issue of *Figurations* will be mailed in April 1996. News and notes should be sent to the Editor, Stephen Mennell, in Dublin, by 1 March 1996.

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

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