

Figurations

Newsletter of the Norbert Elias Foundation

FROM THE NORBERT ELIAS FOUNDATION

Wilbert van Vree wins the second Norbert Elias Amalfi Prize

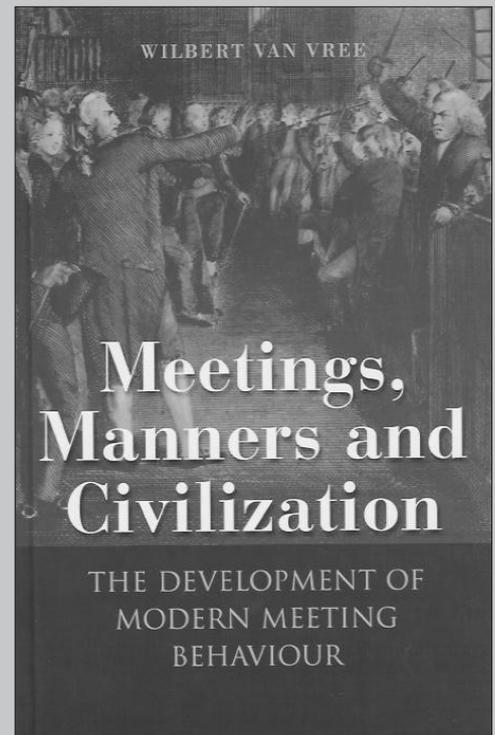
The Norbert Elias Amalfi Prize 2001 has been awarded to Wilbert van Vree for his book *Meetings, Manners and Civilisation* (London: University of Leicester Press, 1999 - see *Figurations* 12). The prize is awarded for the best first book by a European social scientist published in the years 1998–2000.



This year the jury consisted of Professors Carlo Mongardini and Alessandro Cavalli on behalf of the Premio Europeo Amalfi organisation, and Professors Johan Goudsblom, Hermann Korte and Stephen Mennell on behalf of the Norbert Elias Foundation.

The prize was awarded for the first time in 1999

to David Lepoutre for his book *Coeur de Banlieue* (see *Figurations* 12). This year's prize was presented to Dr Van Vree at a ceremony in Amalfi on 26 May. A full report will appear in *Figurations* 16.



Offer to Librarians

The Norbert Elias Foundation is in a position to offer a limited number of copies of certain books by Norbert Elias (in various languages) free of charge to university libraries in countries with weak currencies. Readers of *Figurations* who are interested in this offer should ask the Librarian of their university to write on his or her official letterhead to the Secretary to the Foundation, Saskia Visser, at J.J. Viottastraat 13, 1071 JM Amsterdam, The Netherlands, specifying the titles and the preferred language.

■ THE CANONISATION OF ELIAS IN FRANCE: A REJOINDER BY DANIEL GORDON

I appreciate the opportunity to respond to the criticisms of my viewpoints made by Pieter Spierenburg and others in the last issue of *Figurations*. The questions raised are numerous. They concern such things as the relationship between volkish thought and sociology in Elias's work; Elias's relationship to Max Weber; the canonisation of Elias, especially in France; and the value of Elias's France/Germany contrast image. Some questions were also raised about whether I had even read certain basic texts, such as Elias's 1929 essay on anti-semitism (an essay that I had in fact already obtained and read, thanks to the municipal library in Mannheim). In light of the numerous methodological and substantive issues, I think it is unwise for me to try to respond in this newsletter, which is not a forum for the publication of scholarly articles or lengthy exchanges. I am satisfied with the fact that *Figurations* has made the direction of my work known. I have two articles on Elias in progress; drafts of each have been provisionally accepted for publication. I think the best way to continue this debate will be for me to inform the readers of *Figurations* where they can read these articles after they appear in print. In the meantime, those with a special interest in Elias's treatment of France or in his treatment of early modern civility can consult my 1994 book, *Citizens Without Sovereignty*, to get a sense of why I disagree with Elias on some major questions.

■ NORBERT ELIAS: THE PLAY

You've read the books, now see the play. Markus Friederici, who teaches in the Institut für Soziologie at the University of Hamburg, has written a play in three acts, *Der Sündenfall des Norbert Elias* ('The Downfall of Norbert Elias') as a very original way of teaching the principles of figurational sociology. 'Norbert Elias, Menschenwissenschaftler' is himself the leading character. The first act, true to life, sees Elias in conversation with a student while out walking. The second act sees Elias on trial, defending his ideas before a judge, standing up to prosecuting counsel. In the third act, he is in prison, and in con-

versation with his fellow-prisoner Lindemann, who – says the author – really represents Adolf Eichmann.

■ NORBERT ELIAS IN LONDON (1)

David Rotman has now made a preliminary report on the research he carried out in the Norbert Elias papers in the German National Literature Archive at Marbach-an-der-Neckar, as second recipient of the Elias Foundation's Marbach research bursary. His work focused in particular on Elias's correspondence in the years between his leaving Frankfurt and his appointment to a post at the University of Leicester, as a means of reconstructing the pattern of his daily life and, in turn, of understanding the development of his thought and writing in those years. The period 1933–54 remains the part of his life about which least detail is known. Elias's own reminiscences dwell most vividly on the Breslau, Heidelberg and Frankfurt years, and the research of Korte, Hackeschmidt and Blomert has also shed light on that earlier period; the direct memories of most of those of us who knew him later in life, on the other hand, date back only to the Leicester years.

Rotman found evidence about the Paris sojourn rather scanty, although surviving letters from the late 1930s when Elias was corresponding from London with (notably) Gisèle Freund in Paris shed a little light on the Paris years. Rotman notes a number of letters signed only by first name or nickname, which he has not been able to identify (I believe, however, that those signed 'Teddy' are from Adorno). Rotman proposes to pursue further research on the Paris period in the files of the prefecture of Paris.

On the London years, evidence is more abundant, and Rotman reports, for example, that Elias changed his address no less than twenty-four times between 1935 and 1948. He traces Elias's sources of income, from Jewish charities, from his research fellowship at the London School of Economics (1940–44), and from the Workers' Education Association (WEA) and London and Cambridge extra-mural departments. Between 1945 and 1950 Elias worked regularly for the British Foreign Office, under their

'Adult Education Schemes for the British Zone of Germany', and made several visits to Germany under its auspices during this period. This was news to me; I had understood, though I believe only on the basis of conversations with Eric Dunning, that Elias did not return to Germany after the war until he was invited to give two lectures on British public opinion in Bad Homburg in 1959 and 1960. Elias once told me that he had worked for British intelligence at the end of the war, interviewing German prisoners to detect unrepentant Nazis. He did not go into any further detail, perhaps because, in the 1970s in my experience, people who worked in intelligence during the war still felt bound by the Official Secrets Act. I have wondered whether the collection of letters from prisoners of war written in the summer of 1944 on which he draws in *The Germans* (pp. 390–8) could have been acquired at that time. Perhaps his work after the war may have involved a continuing intelligence component under the (very plausible) guise of adult education? Unfortunately, David Rotman was unable to turn up anything further about these post-war visits to Germany, beyond the fact that they took place.

Rotman also studied the letters Elias wrote when *Über den Prozess der Zivilisation* was published; among the papers, he even found the card of Sigmund Freud, to whom Elias had sent a copy. On the intriguing question of his relations in London with Karl Mannheim, Rotman was unable to find any new evidence. There has been much speculation about a positive breach between the two having taken place at some stage, although Elias always denied it. Rotman concludes judiciously that 'only six letters, dated from 1936 to 1941, nevertheless allow us to think that the links between the two men, who would seem to have lived out their exile in England in totally different ways, became more distant with the years'.

SJM

■ NORBERT ELIAS IN LONDON (2)

In his book *Confronting History, A Memoir* (Madison WN: University of Wisconsin Press, 2000, pp. 210–11),

the late George Mosse reminisced: In London my friends Francis Carsten and his wife, Ruth, ran a hospitable house. He was tall and earnest, while his wife, from South Germany was lively and equally knowledgeable. Both in their own ways were important and committed historians, Francis writing seminal books spanning the time from the sixteenth century to the modern age. With his mastery of the sources, Francis was a different kind of historian than I was, with my bent for theory and analysis, and he was justifiably often critical of my work. If he were to write the kind of memoir I have attempted, however, it would be filled with the drama of politics, for in his early days he was for a time an active Socialist and involved with a German underground anti-facist movement. In his house I met George Lichtheim and the sociologist Norbert Elias (who played Santa Claus at the Carstens' Christmas parties).

Elias was then quite unknown, though his famous book about the civilising process had already appeared in 1939, published by an obscure Swiss publishing house. He later obtained positions in Kenya [sic] and the University of Leicester before retiring in Holland and enjoying his very belated fame. (I thought that gave hope to all the rest of us.) But the many times I stayed in Amsterdam I never visited him, for I had caused him great offence because of the arguments we had when we met, and because I had written a not too favourable review when his book was republished without taking modern scholarship into account. Norbert Elias was without doubt difficult to get along with, touchy and opinionated. At the time when I wrote *The Crisis of German Ideology* we quarrelled, especially about the nature of the German National Party, which he defended against the charge of racism, in spite of its undoubtedly racist and anti-Jewish propaganda. I would not give in either, full of my discovery of the Janus-like face of these German conservatives: respectable in public but racist on the street. Unfortunately this disagreement never became the kind of dialogue built upon different points of view from which I have benefited so much. Later, however, it was some of my students who quite rightly helped organise a New York symposium to

honour him when his seminal book was republished in English. Elias was a lonely pioneer in the history of respectability, a history in which I myself became interested in the 1980s. If I had been involved in it earlier, I might have had a better appreciation of Elias himself, and we might have had a fruitful relationship. The civilising process which he had analysed was crucial in establishing the manners which became normative in our society, and these in turn became an integral part of the behaviour patterns which constituted respectability. And respectability, in turn, became the cement holding society together, as important for this purpose as any economic activity.

■ NATALIE HEINICH IN AMSTERDAM

Nathalie Heinich, author of *La sociologie de Norbert Elias* (Paris: La Découverte, 1997) and of many books in the sociology of art, has been appointed to the Boekman Chair in the Sociology of the Arts at the University of Amsterdam. Her inaugural lecture, 'What is an artistic event? A new approach to sociological discourse' was published in *Boekman Cahiers* 44, 2000. In the *Boekman Cahiers* 46, December 2000, there appear two critical assessments of Heinich's work: Rudi Laermans, 'Nathalie Heinich, a sociologist of the arts: a critical appraisal' (pp. 389-402), and Willem Schinkel, 'What do we do when we say "This is an artistic event?"' (pp. 404-13).

■ GOLDTHORPE'S VIEW OF SOCIOLOGY

John H. Goldthorpe, *On Sociology: Numbers, Narratives, and the Integration of Research and Theory*. Oxford, Oxford University Press. 2000, 337pp. In *On Sociology*, Goldthorpe sets forth the credo regarding sociology as a science that he has developed in a research career stretching back to the 1950s – and back to Leicester, where as a young man he was a central figure along with Norbert Elias in lively debates. Consisting for the most part of a set of previously published essays, it is a forcefully written book and, for the most part, not annoyingly repetitive. It is also replete with illuminating insights. Nevertheless,

in my opinion it is fundamentally flawed. More particularly, Goldthorpe presents his understanding of sociology as the solution to the subject's current crisis, whereas in my view, far from representing a solution much of what he writes is more a symptom and thus part of the problem. Let me attempt to demonstrate briefly how that is so.

Goldthorpe is surely right to argue that 'The intellectual state of contemporary sociology could in fact only be described as one of general, and steadily worsening, disarray' (p. 1). He is surely also right in seeing so-called 'social theorists', such as Giddens and Alexander, not only as responding to but more as central contributors to the crisis in the sense that, for them, 'a vista is opened up of books being written out of books, with little need for empirical enquiry' (p. 7). However, Goldthorpe deals with 'social theorists' dismissively and assertively rather than by seeking to demonstrate the weakness of their case. Moreover, his own notion of what constitutes 'empirical enquiry' is excessively narrow and rests, as does his view of 'rational action (choice) theory' (RAT) as the most desirable form of sociological theorising on what are essentially outmoded Popperian foundations. These lead him to an almost entirely method-driven view of the subject rather than to an appreciation of the need for a constant two-way traffic between research and theory.

Goldthorpe's first chapter is entitled 'The Uses of History in Sociology: Reflections on Some Recent Tendencies'. In it, his principal targets are the likes of Barrington Moore, Theda Skocpol and Immanuel Wallerstein. He is right to be critical of Barrington Moore for his failure properly to understand historical work on the English civil war. He is also right to excoriate all these authors for their dependency on secondary sources. His central argument in this chapter, however, is that history and sociology ought to remain separate subjects because, while sociologists can collect and construct their own new data, historians are necessarily eternally reliant on the finite relics randomly left over from the past. Notwithstanding such facts as that, as one aspect of processes of rationalisation, relics are being increasingly deliber-

ately bequeathed in order to help future historians, in that way reducing to some extent the randomness of the historical record, at one level this argument is a truism. At another, however, it betrays the poverty of imagination of a largely method-driven view of the subject. That is because the main reason why historical or, more properly, processual explanations should be paramount in sociology is the fact that humans and their societies, indeed the universe as a whole, are processes in space–time. It is a pity that Goldthorpe seems never to have read Elias’s discussions of history and sociology. Had he done so, he might have managed to avoid the commonsense view of time which implicitly plagues this chapter and much of the rest of his book.

One of Goldthorpe’s recurring arguments in *On Sociology* is ‘the claim that the methods of enquiry that are used across the natural and the social sciences alike are informed by what might be loosely called a common “logic of inference” – a logic of relating evidence and argument.’ (p. 67). He later says that ‘(T)his logic of inference can never be definitively codified’, which perhaps explains why Goldthorpe, whilst repeatedly incanting the phrase ‘logic of inference’ like a mantra, never specifies any of the rules which supposedly govern this ‘universal logic’. Perhaps he thinks it is a Kantian *a priori*? More significantly, Goldthorpe informs us that: ‘The application of this logic presupposes a world that exists independently of our ideas about it, and that, in engaging in scientific enquiry, we aim to obtain information, or data, about this world that we can then take as a basis for inferences that extend beyond the data to hand, whether in a descriptive or explanatory mode’ (p. 67). Perhaps predictably, Goldthorpe fails to tell us why we cannot infer ‘beyond the data’ ‘in a descriptive or explanatory mode’ in historical sociological studies, a possibility which would seem further to offset his ideas about the limitations which accrue from the finite character of historical relics. More importantly still, however, and whilst probably thinking that he is applying a *coup de grâce* to the arguments of voluntaristic social constructionists, he evidently fails to realise that people’s ideas about their social worlds

are one of the constitutive features of these worlds.

Following the ‘methodological individualism’ proposed by Popper (1957), another of Goldthorpe’s repeated contentions is that sociological explanations must always be related to the level of individual social actions. In other words, sophisticated though Goldthorpe’s approach undoubtedly is statistically and in regard to the methodology of survey research, it ultimately rests on an unexamined commonsense or pre-scientific and in many ways arbitrary understanding of what ‘an individual’ is. For example, he appears to want a sociology which is entirely independent of psychology and he describes explanations ‘in terms of status striving, frustration or anxiety’ as of a ‘more psychologistic nature’ (p. 111) In short, Goldthorpe works with an *homo clausus* conception, and thus views the ‘capacity of social scientists to gain access to actors’ values, beliefs, attitudes, goals, or preferences, let alone to their more complex mental constructions such as “definitions of the situation...” (p. 89) with what he calls ‘radical scepticism’. In this way, he is led to construct a view of sociology which avoids crucial aspects of the real world of humans. Goldthorpe’s ‘individual’ is typically ‘rational’ (read modern, western, adult) and he (Goldthorpe) discusses issues such as class and social mobility without reference to essential concepts such as property and, above all, power. He is also enabled in this manner assertively to dismiss what he appears to understand as the ‘culturalist’ approach to the understanding of social inequality of authors such as Pierre Bourdieu (pp. 168, 9).

Arguably the weakest part of Goldthorpe’s overall case, however, is provided by some of what he regards as key, clinching arguments in his final chapter on ‘sociology and the probabilistic revolution’. I do not claim that Goldthorpe’s arguments here are weak because what he calls the ‘probabilistic revolution’ never occurred. That would be patently absurd. I am, though, going to suggest that he shows a leniency towards the arguments of Quetelet, some of them crude in the extreme, that he fails to show towards the in some ways equally crude arguments of Comte and

Durkheim who are, for Goldthorpe, the principal ‘villains of the piece.’ Such crudities are, I would suggest, to be expected from the pioneers of a subject such as Comte, Durkheim and, yes, Comte’s intellectual enemy and proposer of a statistical approach to the subject, Quetelet. It is Goldthorpe’s contention that Comte and Durkheim remained trapped, on the one hand in an eighteenth-century conception of the world – in which it was ‘deemed to be governed by stern necessity and universal laws’ rather than by ‘laws of chance’ (p. 261) – and on the other, in a ‘holistic’ view of societies and sociological method. What Goldthorpe fails to see in this connection is that, whilst we can see with hindsight that Quetelet’s contribution to statistics was, in severely modified form, going to prove sociologically more fruitful than Comte’s conception of universal social laws, the latter’s ‘sociological holism’ or, more properly, his view of organisms and societies as structurally more complex than astronomical, physical and chemical phenomena and hence of biology and sociology as needing synthesising more than analytic methods is, again with retrospective modifications, perfectly reasonable. More particularly, Comte recognised that human societies are not just heaps of (rational!) individual atoms but organised, and that their smallest self-sustaining unit, the equivalent of the biological cell, is the family. Following on from arguments such as this, it was Elias’s contention that the figurations that human beings form have recurring structural properties such as interdependency chains, power ratios, axes of tension and class systems which cannot be accounted for by reference to the properties of individuals and their actions alone. Imagine: if Goldthorpe has his way, rather than Comte, Marx and Durkheim being regarded as central among sociology’s ‘founding fathers’ – for obvious reasons, he does not wish to deny this status to Max Weber – they will be seen as having led us into a blind alley, and our ‘true ancestors’ will be Condorcet and Quetelet, the man whose use of the term ‘social physics’ led Comte to coin the neologism ‘sociology’ in the first place. If Goldthorpe were right on this, the irony would be supreme. However, as I hope I have begun to show in this review, he is not right. His mode of thinking does

not enable him to recognise anything other than polar extremes, dichotomies or either–ors. Moreover, his ongoing attempt to impose outmoded Popperian conceptions on to our subject exacerbates the admittedly serious crisis in which sociology finds itself today. If John Goldthorpe wishes to continue supporting the positions which he espouses in *On Sociology*, perhaps he should seriously consider resurrecting the title ‘social physics’. Alternatively, he might recognise that there has been a struggle between the advocates of, on the one hand an historical and comparative approach and, on the other, the advocates of a statistical approach to sociology since its early days and that this rivalry can be fruitful if care is taken to avoid the dismissive attitude towards the work of others which Goldthorpe exemplifies in this book.

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Editors’ Note: We invited John Goldthorpe to write a rejoinder to the above review, but he declined.

■ THE INFLUENCE OF NORBERT ELIAS UPON CRIMINOLOGY

The influence of Norbert Elias upon criminology has taken two forms. The first can be dated from the 1980s and continues up to the present day. Elias’s notion of a civilising process was adapted by scholars dissatisfied by the two reductive accounts that had been dominant in histories of punishment. The first was a complacent Whiggish reading of history that simply assumed that people would be repulsed by open displays of violence, such as the scaffold, and would willingly choose less obviously violent forms of punishment. Its obvious problem is that it explains the diminution of overt violence as a result of a benign human nature, which forecloses on further questions. Scholars who disputed this view generally adopted either a Marxist or Foucauldian explanation: punishment served a societal function, be it the maintenance of class hegemony or the disciplining of the working class. But why did society embrace less violent forms of punishment? Why did soci-

eties not rely on the gallows or guillotine to enforce discipline? The old problems of functionalism resurfaced in these accounts. Although Foucault’s account was to prove extraordinarily influential in the decade following its publication in 1975, scholars were becoming increasingly dissatisfied with its one-sided perspective, which emphasised issues of control but neglected the expressive aspects of punishment.

The tenets of the civilising approach seemed to offer historians of punishment the resources to outline the cultural bases of control, without relapsing into a Whiggish reading of history. The first notable effort was Pieter Spierenburg’s *The Spectacle of Suffering*, an examination of the changing forms of punishment in Holland and Europe between 1650 and 1750. A culture that openly tolerated violence put a premium on public displays of punishment. In the midst of growing interdependence, as the elites were brought closer to the masses, they affected disgust at public punishments, a sentiment which gradually percolated through the populace. Although there is some dispute about the details of Spierenburg’s account, the usefulness of Elias in interpreting shifts in punishment is increasingly accepted. However, I have some doubt over whether Elias’s schema can capture the complete complexity of penal relations. In some respects, the approach of Elias is still wedded to a Whiggish reading of history, since it stresses that punishment moved away from a repressive approach. But this neglects the dilemma penal administrators faced in trying to demarcate the difference between offenders and law-abiding citizens. As one commentator opined in the 1770s: ‘how to compel, and at the same time reform, is the question’. The problem with historians using Elias’s approach is that they tend to efface this persistent element of compulsion.

But Elias’s work is not only used in the mining of history. Contemporary developments in punishment globally, chiefly the huge growth in the numbers imprisoned but also the apparent coarsening of sentiments towards offenders has led some criminologists to question whether we are currently witnessing a ‘decivilising’ of punishment and what

form it might take. Fletcher (1997) has provided three criteria of a ‘decivilising’ process. Framing them in terms of punishment, they are (1) offenders are perceived as fundamentally different from the rest of society; (2) punishment is responsive to spontaneous calls for revenge; (3) punishment relies on external constraints rather than the inculcation of norms. The extent to which these criteria pertain to contemporary punishment is still a matter of dispute. Opponents of the ‘decivilising’ thesis argue that punishment is now classified under actuarial justice, and so represents the belated incursion of bureaucratic practices into the field of punishment. As a result, punishment is becoming more rather than less rationalised. Secondly, opponents point to the resurgence of rehabilitative practices in the 1990s, after a period of doubt in the 1980s. Proponents of the thesis can point to the record numbers imprisoned or under some form of supervision, and the readiness of governments to pass laws which incapacitate offenders (three strikes and you’re out etc.). The strongest argument in favour of the thesis is to point to the shift in sentiments regarding offenders. For example, in 1895, the Gladstone Committee in England argued that in comparison to other notable social achievements, the persistence of a number of habitual offenders was a ‘growing stain’ upon English civilisation. Furthermore, many of the provisions that were developed against allegedly habitual criminals, e.g. preventive detention, fell into disuse because it was thought they were a mark of a totalitarian society. Now, governments view growing prison numbers as some sort of political virility symbol, an indication of their readiness to defend the general populace against putative attacks. These issues are a matter of pressing debate, but it is clear that Elias’s work will be invaluable in explaining them.

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Key Readings

Fletcher, J. (1997) *Violence and Civilisation*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
Garland, D. (1990) *Punishment and Modern Society*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Pratt, J. (1998) 'Toward the "Decivilising" of Punishment?', *Social and Legal Studies* 7 (4): 487–515.

Spierenberg, P. (1984), *The Spectacle of Suffering*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Vaughan, B. (2000), 'The Civilising Process and the Janus-Face of Modern Punishment', *Theoretical Criminology* 4 (1): 71–91.

■ VISIONS OF MODERNITY

Dennis Smith, *Norbert Elias and Modern Social Theory*, London: Sage, 2001, ISBN 0-7619-6107-0, 198 pp.

In his new book Dennis Smith presents a reading of Norbert Elias by comparing him to four social theorists: Hannah Arendt, Talcott Parsons, Michel Foucault and Zygmunt Bauman. The focus of the comparison is the western experience of 'modernity' in the twentieth century. Recurrent themes are the specific development of Germany and other European societies, the interpretation of the Holocaust, the demise of European Empires, the changes in the regulation of the body and the formation of personality structures.

In the first part of the book ('Modernity and Elias'), Smith explores the biographical origins of Elias's concerns and his distinctive approach to the issues concerned. Such a biographical perspective also informs the comparisons with Arendt, Parsons, Foucault and Bauman, which make up the second part of the book. Smith interprets these works as the embodiment of a particular 'vision', at the root of which is the biography of the author. He quotes Schumpeter's saying that in every scientific venture 'the thing that comes first is Vision.' In Schumpeter's sense, vision designates the specific set of phenomena to be investigated as well as the personal intuition of their structure.

What Smith thus examines and compares are 'visions' of modernity and their biographical infrastructure. Such particular visions are well captured by metaphors. Elias thus resembles the fisherman from the story by Edgar Allan Poe who survives the maelstrom. Foucault, on the other hand, identified with the

prisoner who is under permanent observation in the Panopticon.

Consequently following this mode of analysis, Dennis Smith is less interested in the explanatory power of the various theories he compares. He quietly leaves aside the issues of research, fact-finding and historical evidence. Instead, he skilfully moves back and forth between the personal experience and the particular vision of the theorist. His interest in Elias similarly stems from the fact that he has a 'strong vision of how the world works' (p. viii). And the excitement that his writings produce comes for Smith largely from Elias's struggle to cope with 'the tension between his Jewish identity and his German identity.'

While this mode of analysing a number of major sociological contributions has produced a lively book, it is – sociologically speaking – not entirely satisfactory. Personal experiences, after all, do not straightforwardly lead to significant *oeuvres*. There are mediating structures and Dennis Smith does not give sufficient information about the social and intellectual context in which these theorists were trained, worked and wrote their work.

From a pedagogical perspective, Smith's approach has a disadvantage as well. His book is clear and well informed, but I find his mode of comparison too eclectic. When Elias resembles the fisherman and Foucault the prisoner, it is all too easy to conclude that 'modernity encompasses both situations'; and that in order to understand modernity 'we need the resources of both Michel Foucault and Norbert Elias.'

In his chapter on Parsons, Smith explicitly argues for a form of eclecticism. Instead of having to choose between alternatives, Smith wants to bring together different works in a reasoned debate: 'There is no need to make a choice, since our knowledge and our understanding are in continual dialogue, each modifying the other' (p. 77). And so indeed, he succeeds in combining Arendt, Elias, Foucault, Parsons

But perhaps the 'continual dialogue' between canonised figures, the permanent search for their similarities and dif-

ferences, the unending quest for convergence and divergence, is in the end simply the privilege of the teacher. When engaging in substantive research, it is less easy to refuse to choose.

The third and last part of the book ('Towards Global Modernity') differs somewhat from the two previous parts. It contains a chapter on the genesis of the European Union (using notions of Arendt, Elias and Parsons), as well as a chapter on shame and humiliation in modern life (which is part of a larger study in progress). The final chapter is a synthesis of the book as a whole and a plea for social theory to address the issue of 'global modernity'.

Johan Heilbron

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Despite its title, this book is not primarily about Norbert Elias. If you are looking for a volume which offers a systematic and sophisticated discussion of Elias's thought, Stephen Mennell's book remains the place to go. If you want a contextualisation of Elias and a demonstration of ways in which the agenda of modern social thought might centralise his work, one ought to begin with Richard Kilminster's recent book. Dennis Smith has different axes to grind; axes which, despite the enticing title, make this book of limited interest to figurational sociology.

On a number of occasions, Dennis Smith states that his book represents groundwork for a wider project of the development of an original social theory of global modernity. He points towards a couple of the dominant concerns of this theory – which he promises to offer in future publications – at the end of this volume. He tries to say some original things about European union as an instance of the global lengthening of chains of interdependency under American hegemony, and shame and humiliation as emotions which are dominant in this new figuration. Smith positions this project in terms of issues raised by Elias, Arendt, Parsons, Foucault, and Bauman, and evidently sees no need to pay sustained attention to those who

have already attempted to develop the themes of those writers (for instance, Tom Scheff has a surprisingly low profile in this text).

This is a book in which Dennis Smith is thinking out loud. One wishes Smith's project well, but this book highlights problems which will have to be resolved if it is to have any coherence or appeal. First, Smith brings Elias together with the other thinkers mentioned above because of his 'intuition' that a comparing and contrasting of their themes and concerns will be able to open up new theoretical avenues. On the evidence presented in this book, either Smith's intuition was wrong; or he has to appreciate that perhaps Elias, Arendt, Parsons, Foucault and Bauman are further apart than he believes. Smith does not develop a convincing case that the positions of these

critics can be pulled together into any synthesis approaching coherence. This should come as no surprise to anyone who has read their texts in detail and with empathy for the authors. (To my mind, if we are to 'compare and contrast' Elias with any current thinkers it should be Giddens and Bourdieu – and in at least one of those comparisons, the virtues of Elias's intellectual project will become very clear indeed.) Second, Smith's project will only be able to possess the theoretical substance it needs if greater care is taken to avoid projecting arguments onto writers. For example, in the chapter on Elias and Bauman, it is said that Bauman believes that humans have an 'innate' moral capacity (he believes no such thing) and that Bauman treats the *Soviet* experience as prototypical for understanding modernity. I was under the impression that

Bauman had argued that the *Holocaust* has that status. No doubt critics who are better informed than I will be able to find similar projections throughout the rest of the book. Third, Smith's project will have to be clearly and thoroughly organised if it is going to be able to synthesize a range of literature and deal with substantial empirical issues.

Smith is to be applauded and supported for trying to 'do' social theory on the grand scale which is represented by Elias, Arendt, Parsons, Foucault and Bauman. But the texts of the writers upon whom Smith seeks to draw also show that grand ambition works best on firm foundations.

Keith Tester
University of Portsmouth



■ RECENT BOOKS AND ARTICLES



Eric Dunning, *Sport Matters: Sociological Studies of Sport, Violence and Civilization*. London: Routledge, 1999. ix + 281 pp., ISBN: 0-415-09378-3 (pbk)

Eric Dunning has published extensively on figurational sociology, sport and sport-related issues in leading journals and has co-authored many previous books.

Curiously, *Sport Matters* is his first sole-authored book in his long list of publications, and it was voted the best book of the year in the field by the North American Society for the Sociology of Sport. He describes it as a sequel to *Quest for Excitement* (1986) in which his co-author was Norbert Elias, and to *Sport and Leisure in the Civilising Process* co-edited with Chris Rojek in 1992. The title of this work sets our expectations on two levels: (1) *that sport does matter* as a social activity pursued by many, both as participants and spectators i.e. sport warrants sociological enquiry and;

(2) that '*sport*' per se is *not homogenous*, there are many matters within, and of, '*sport*' itself. Using a rigorous figurational analysis, Dunning more than successfully fulfils these expectations with a series of critical essays on: emotions in sport and leisure; sport and gender; the commodification of sport; sport and race (which is a new addition to previously published work); soccer and soccer hooliganism in a world perspective (with additional data from North America and Canada); and sport in the Western civilising process. The book is also a detailed outline and defence of figurational soci-

ology as a theoretically and empirically informed school of sociology.

His introduction speaks to 'mainstream' sociology of the importance of 'sport' as a field of sociological enquiry, and of the relevance of figurational sociology to this enquiry. He argues that particular matters in the sporting field such as the relationship between genetic inheritance and social structure and, in the determination of sporting talent can be fruitfully explored using Elias's synthesising perspective which 'is concerned with the links between biology, psychology, sociology and the history of human beings' (p.13). More importantly, the figurational synthesis directly addresses 'the problem of how and why it has come to be that humans have a need for activities such as sports' (p.15). Chapter 1, entitled 'On Problems of the Emotions of Sport and Leisure', elaborates on the initial idea put forward by Elias and Dunning (1969) that sport is a significant and stimulating social activity in the broader social contexts of Western societies characterised by increasing control and routinisation. Drawing on the distinction between spare time and leisure, Dunning and Elias suggested that emotional arousal plays an important part in sport and leisure in that sport performs a de-routinising function, that it operates as a 'highly controlled decontrolling of emotional controls'. Dunning assesses the success of the figurational perspective employed in 1969 in withstanding the test of time and critique. Chapters 2 and 3 are a restatement of the central tenets of the theory of the civilising process. Of particular importance are aspects of sport in Western processes of state formation which currently appear to give 'modern' sports a degree of relative autonomy, contrary to suggestions by some commentators that globalisation and commercialisation processes threaten the basic structures of sport.

Chapters 4 and 5 deal respectively with the development of soccer as a world game, and with the dynamics of sports consumption. The latter is an important contribution to the issue of the commodification of sports, as the author uses the figurational perspective to highlight issues such as the inadequate sociological analysis of the growing exploitation of football fans by football clubs,

managers, top-level players and agents. Chapters 6 and 7 draw on previously published research on soccer hooliganism (e.g. Williams *et al.*, 1989) with the addition of the phenomenon of North American and Canadian spectators as part of a world social problem, and with the development of American sport as a civilising process. Chapters 8 and 9 look at the issues of 'Sport in the process of racial stratification' and 'Sport, gender and civilisation' respectively. Perhaps most interesting in chapter 8 is the author's conceptualisation of the sport-race relationship as the result of caste-class interactions, and the exploration of the social conditions under which sporting prowess can become a power resource. Ironically, this sporting prowess has meant that the success of black athletes has tended to polarize the class division of blacks. Paradoxically, the author suggests, 'a decrease in the intense competitive pressure for sporting success which fuels black superiority in specific sports would probably result and, with it, a decline in that superiority *per se*' (p. 218). Dunning's work on sport, gender and civilisation is an elaboration of earlier work on sport as a male preserve. However, in this chapter Dunning extends his analysis to aspects of the production and reproduction of feminine habituses, identities and behaviour, and to the relationships between masculinity and femininity that are expressed through sport. Using the figurational perspective, sport and gender are centred within a long-term civilising process where the balance of power relations between males and females in sports and other activities has shifted over time. Hence, the development of sport as a male preserve, 'a principal locus for the inculcation and public expression of traditional standards of masculinity' (p. 236) in Western societies, is characterised by shifts in this power balance.

In *Sport Matters* Dunning has successfully pushed the sociological study of sport to the forefront of theoretical and empirical sociological enquiry. The text is provocative and intellectually rigorous, and presents a valuable body of knowledge for students and professionals alike. I concur with Guttmann's (2000) review that Dunning is 'almost always fair-minded and persuasive in his detailed outline and defence of figura-

tional sociology' and, contrary to Cronin's (2000) review, I consider *Sport Matters* to be an outstanding text which is (perhaps) unusually accessible for a text of its kind. This is not surprising to those who have engaged with the author (as student or professional).

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Jan-Willem Gerritsen, *The Control of Fuddle and Flash: A Sociological History of the Regulation of Alcohol and Opiates*. Translated from the Dutch by Beverley Jackson. Leiden: Brill 2000.

Intoxicants are pleasant and addictive. As a result, they arouse both positive and negative attitudes. There are reasons for buying and enjoying them, and there are reasons for limiting or possibly even forbidding their supply and use.

Approaches to this dilemma differ from one country to the next, and from one period to the next in each country. They reflect, in Jan-Willem Gerritsen's phrase, the prevalence of particular *regimes* regulating the production, distribution and consumption of intoxicants. The question is how those regimes come about, function, and change.

This question is tackled cogently in Gerritsen's book *The Control of Fuddle and Flash*, first published in Dutch in 1994, and now also available in English. Tragically, the author suddenly died shortly after completing his book. But his contribution remains important, and the fluent English translation by Beverley Jackson is a welcome addition both to the specialist literature on alcohol and drugs and to figurational studies in general.

The Control of Fuddle and Flash is an ambitious book. It aims to offer empirically founded sociological insights into the regulation of the two major 'intoxicants' – alcohol and opiates – in industrial societies in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. While focusing on three countries: England, the Netherlands, and the United States, the perspective is truly global, extending to the use of opium in India, the former Dutch East Indies, and China.

The historical material is rich and presented clearly. Beginning with the supply side, Gerritsen points at the obvious differences in the production and composition of alcohol and drugs. All the more striking are the similarities in the ways they are used and treated in various social settings. Alcoholic beverages and opiates have both served the same broad range of purposes: to induce religious experiences, to alleviate pain and, most commonly nowadays, for 'pleasure', whether in the company of others or alone. Alongside, and as derivatives of, their religious, medical and recreational functions, alcohol and drugs have had and continue to have important political and economic functions as well. They have served as sources of taxation, as rallying issues for political campaigns, and as merchandise for large commercial transactions.

There is nothing intrinsic about alcohol and drugs that makes them either legal or illegal. In the nineteenth century, the taxes imposed on the opium trade were considered a legitimate source of revenue for the colonial powers of Britain and the Netherlands in Asia. The changing balance of power in the Pacific region brought this lucrative trade to an end. The United States introduced measures to combat the smoking of opium among the Chinese immigrant population; more importantly, they forged an alliance with China to check the British-dominated opium trade. China had lost the opium wars of the nineteenth century; this time it was Britain that was cowed. The United States took the initiative for international opium conferences held in 1913 and 1914, which introduced a worldwide 'regulatory regime' that may be counted among 'the first building blocks of an integrated world community of national states' (p. 85).

This is just one of the many insightful connections shown by Gerritsen in his wide-ranging book. To select one other item, he points at the structural likeness between the 'war on drugs' that is going on everywhere nowadays and the 'war on alcohol' fought in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The Prohibition of alcohol in the United States was effective from 1920 to 1933; the consequences of driving the alcohol industry into the criminal circuit were disastrous

but remained limited to the territory of the US and lasted for only thirteen years. Today's prohibition on drugs has been going on for a much longer period and is affecting the whole world.

Jan-Willem Gerritsen was Norbert Elias's assistant in 1986. This book shows how much he learned from Elias, and how fruitfully Elias's sociological approach can be applied to a subject not researched by Elias himself. The theory of civilising processes and their relation to state formation, as well as the theory of established-outsiders relationships, pervade the entire book and resound marvelously in the final sentence: 'The more established and more powerful groups in society ... reproach outsiders for practicing unrestrained, forbidden or antisocial patterns of consumption, and in the fantasies they weave about these outsiders they attribute the censured behaviour of the few to the group as a whole, with all the repercussions of stigmatization and self-fulfilling prophecies that inevitably ensue'.

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Norman R. Gabriel, 'An "Informalising Spurt" in Clothing Regimes: Court Ballet in the Civilising Process', in William J.F. Keenan, ed., *Dressed to Impress: Looking the Part*. Oxford: Berg, 2001, pp. 69–83. ISBN: 1-85973-455-3 (hb); 1-85973-460-X (pb).

Ballet history, writes Gabriel, has tended to concentrate on individual moments of innovation, when specific women performers are supposed to have rebelled against restrictive clothing; if so, it appears to me to resemble the history of cookery's fondness for invention-myths about particular recipes. Gabriel sets out to move beyond such explanations of the history of ballet based on an unstructured or fortuitous accumulation of virtuosic performances in order to explain how wider social developments provided a framework for changes in ballet clothing and style during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. He follows Elias in investigating the changing balance of formality and informality in the regula-

tion of behaviour in society. He argues that in this relatively autonomous area of artistic production, there may have occurred an 'informalising spurt' in the transformation of external constraints into internal compulsions, bringing about a lessening of the highly restricted clothing styles associated with court ballet. The chapter discusses the social conventions of court ballet, stylised movements in restricted clothing, the *ballet d'action*, the informalising spurt in clothing regimes and the transition to romantic ballet with 'gendered styles of dress'.

SJM

Jason Hughes, 'La consommation de tabac dans le processus de civilisation', in Howard S. Becker, ed., *Qu'est-ce qu'une drogue?* Anglet: Atlantica, 2001, pp. 69–95.

This chapter provides a summary in French of some of the main arguments of Jason Hughes's 1997 University of Leicester PhD thesis (see *Figurations* 9). The book *Qu'est-ce qu'une drogue* contains eleven chapters based on papers presented at the fifth *Entretiens Franklin* in 2000, including an introduction by Howard S. Becker, and psychoanalytic and anthropological perspectives on drug use by Juliet Mitchell and Jack Goody respectively.

SJM

John Mandalios, *Civilisation and the Human Subject*, New York and Oxford: Rowman and Littlefield, 1999. xiii + 205 pp. (ISBN: 0-8476-9177-2).

Mandalios makes an interesting and original attempt to synthesise the work on civilisation of Immanuel Wallerstein, Fernand Braudel, Norbert Elias, Martin Wight and Benjamin Nelson. Unfortunately an already difficult text is maimed by numerous grammatical mistakes, especially the mismatching of verbs and nouns, malapropisms, and a jargon-ridden, un-reader-friendly style. Mandalios's malapropisms include p. 30 '*haute couture*' for '*haute cuisine*';

p. 66 'inextricable' for 'inexplicable'; pp. 69, 124 'gleam(ed)' for 'glean(ed)'; p. 139 'corporal' for 'corporate'; p. 143 'weary' for 'wary'. And here is an example of Mandalios's jargon-ridden style: 'The "humanitic" aspect of this globalised sense of self seems nevertheless to point to a dirempted personhood; a self which is enveloped simultaneously by a Eurocentred logic of "systemic functionality" and some kind of quasi-Parsonian "telic" of individual/collective existence' (p. 106). 'Humanitic' may, of course, be a misprint for 'humanistic'. However, given Mandalios's use of the adjectival form, 'telic', instead of the noun-form, 'telos', when he presumably means 'purpose' or 'goal', it is difficult to tell. Hopefully these few examples are enough to indicate that *Civilisation and the Human Subject* appears not to have been properly copy-edited or proof-read. That is a pity because John Mandalios has some interesting things to say.

Mandalios's central argument is that mainstream sociologists began to go astray when they started to treat 'societies' as if they were bounded and non-porous 'social systems' rather than units which (i) influence each other; (ii) form parts of 'civilisational complexes' which also affect each other; and (iii) can only be fully understood by taking such interactions and interpenetrations into account. It is because they are all concerned in their different ways with 'civilisations' rather than 'societies' that Mandalios seeks to synthesise the part-complementary, part-contradictory work of Wallerstein, Braudel, Elias, Wight and Nelson. Since I know it best, I shall use the work of Elias in an attempt to convey how far, in my opinion, he succeeds.

Mandalios's understanding of Elias is superior in key respects to those of, e.g., Giddens (1984) and Smith (2000). While Giddens and Smith both offer the standard misinterpretation of Elias as a theorist of 'unilinear progress', Mandalios correctly recognizes that Elias succeeded in developing a multi-levelled, multi-directional and hence more reality-congruent conceptualisation. Mandalios also appreciates, again *pace* Giddens, how Elias managed to avoid 'Eurocentrism'. For example, he tellingly quotes Bull and Watson (1984) on this to the

effect that: 'Because it was in fact Europe and not America, Asia or Africa that first dominated and, in so doing, unified the world, it is not our perspective but the historical record itself that can be called Eurocentric'. It is difficult to think of how that could be more succinctly or non-judgementally put.

Despite such strengths, Mandalios nevertheless falls into some of the traps into which commentators who are only superficially acquainted with Elias's work and/or who are overly dependent on the pre-2000 translation of *The Civilising Process* are liable to fall. Mandalios berates Elias for 'neglecting'/'failing' to mention the part played by religious orders and monasteries in the European civilising process. But Elias's own subtitle for Volume One was 'Changes of Behaviour in the Secular Upper Classes in the West'. Elias did not 'neglect' but deliberately chose in the context of *Über den Prozess der Zivilisation* not to consider, the role of the churches or religion systematically or at length. That was to be a later task, perhaps for someone else.

Mandalios also tells us that 'civilising and de-civilising thrusts from "without" are altogether ignored and denied' by Elias. It may be true that, with the exception of the *Völkerwanderungen* of the so-called 'Dark Ages', he *ignored* them; but to claim that he *denied* them is to comprehend *The Civilising Process* as intended to be a complete and final theory rather than one contribution to understanding among others. Mandalios also wrongly asserts that 'Elias neglects to take account of the tumultuous changes brought on by' 'the Reformation and the Scientific Revolution'. He cannot have read the introduction to the 1968 edition of *Über den Prozess*, Elias's work on 'scientific establishments', or be aware of the work Elias did for Alfred Weber on the part played by the Italian city states in the development of science.

It would, of course, be wrong to dismiss all of Mandalios's criticisms of Elias out of hand. I do not agree with it, but his contention that Elias overplays the role of power is a serious argument and certainly worthy of further exploration. Moreover, what Mandalios is able to tell us *via* his readings of Wallerstein,

Braudel, Wight and Nelson about monasteries, religious orders, and the non-European civilisations that Elias hardly touched upon in the main body of his work can serve as a touchstone for all sorts of discussions and programmes of comparative civilisational research. I am sure that Mandalios will continue to make interesting contributions in that context. I only hope that, if and when he does so, he and his publishers pay closer attention to issues of language and communication than has been the case in *Civilisation and the Human Subject*.

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Barbara A. Misztal, *Informality: Social Theory and Contemporary Practice*. London: Routledge, 2000. 265 pp. ISBN: 0-415-15673-4 (hbk); 0-415-15674-2 (pbk).

From an Eliasian perspective, perhaps one needs to know little about this book beyond its title and subtitle. After a quarter of a century of increasingly subtle discussions of *informalisation* and *reformationalisation*, the title *Informality* instantly represents a step backwards, from a processual view to blatant *Zustandsreduktion*. Misztal's first chapter confirms this, through a static attempt at 'defining informality'. The reference to 'social theory' in the sub-title equally instantly flags up that this will be a discussion not in the fashion of Elias, who sought throughout his career to show how philosophical issues can be transformed into sociological questions susceptible to theoretical-empirical investigation, but rather the opposite: what might be called the Parsons-Habermas-Giddens tradition of transforming sociological questions, under the label of 'social theory', into philosophoidal ones. In the latter respect, Misztal is not the worst example I have met: her concerns stay recognisably sociological, but she nevertheless takes the 'social theory' route of comparing and contrasting what other people have said, and yearning for a diagnosis of our times, rather than generating questions for careful theoretical-empirical investigation. There are scattered references to Elias – to his main discussion of *informalisation* in *Studien über die*

Deutschen and to aspects of the theory of civilising processes – at pp. 22, 42, 44–6, 67, 74 and 76–77, but no evidence of very detailed reading or systematic attempt to use the theory. More surprisingly, there is only one passing reference to Cas Wouters' work (p. 45), and only one of his many essays (which he published especially in *Theory, Culture and Society* and the *Journal of Social History* in the 1980s and 1990s) on informalising processes is cited. There are no references to the work of Christien Brinkgreve, Michel Korzec, Paul Kapteyn, or, more recently, Hans-Peter Waldhoff, which have played such a part in making the debate about informalisation such a sophisticated one.

SJM



Sybille Oßwald-Bargende,

Die Mätresse, der Fürst und die Macht: Christina Wilhelmina von Gräventz und die höfische Gesellschaft. Frankfurt/New York: Campus, 2000. 336 pp. ISBN 3-593-36637-1.

This published PhD thesis uses the case study of Christina Wilhelmina von Gräventz (1686–1744), a mistress of the duke of Württemberg, to explore female political power in early modern European courts. The author draws extensively on Norbert Elias's figurational approach to structure the book around three key areas of analysis. The first part examines the figuration of the Württemberg court, meaning a study of the court as the network of personal relationships and social environment of Christina Wilhelmina and her contemporaries. The second analyses the position of individuals within this figuration by looking at how different people related to each other through chains of interdependency. The main concern here is to determine the position of women in general and mistresses in particular. The third part investigates the nature of this interdependency through a careful study of Christina Wilhelmina's personal relationship with the duke, duchess and her brother Friedrich Wilhelm, who ultimately betrayed her in a court intrigue.

The conclusions broadly endorse Elias's model of a court society, whilst chal-

lenging some of his ideas, such as his belief in a transition to 'romantic love' in this period, and his argument that the primary female court role was to assist in the 'civilising' of the male courtiers and in helping to improve their husbands' social capital. However, Oßwald-Bargende's broad defence of the court society model does not engage sufficiently with its recent critics, such as Jeroen Duindam and John Adamson. She also neglects the current debate on absolutism which has implications for her acceptance of Elias's concept of a 'royal mechanism'. Nonetheless, her study greatly extends our knowledge of female court power and can serve as a model for those wishing to apply the figurational approach to the history of early modern social elites.

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Richard Rosenfeld, 'Patterns in Adult Homicide: 1980–1995', in Alfred Blumstein and Joel Wallman, eds, *The Crime Drop in America.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000, pp. 130–63.

Rosenfeld demonstrates that: 'The decline in adult homicide in the United States has been substantial, widespread, and enduring. Although such predictions are always hazardous, it does not appear to be part of a cyclical process that is likely to turn up soon – if anything, it is countercyclical. The adult rates dropped during periods of high and low unemployment, falling and rising income levels, and during both the growth and decline phase of the youth–firearm–violence epidemic. It follows that the conditions responsible for the downward trend in adult homicide themselves must be relatively enduring features of the social and political order'.

Seeking those relatively enduring features, Rosenfeld remarks that 'If church is the last refuge of scoundrels, "culture" is the final recourse of social scientists in search of explanations when existing economic, social, and political theories

have been exhausted. ... Cultural theories are not unknown in criminology, but they are usually invoked to explain high or increasing levels of violence. ... An important exception is Norbert Elias's theory of the *civilising process*.' He then discusses the usefulness of the theory in explaining trends in homicide.

Rosenfeld's chapter is just one symptom of an increasingly widespread use of Elias's work among criminologists, thanks partly to David Garland's influential *Punishment and Modern Society* (Clarendon Press, 1990). See the brief survey of this criminological literature by Barry Vaughan above. In the meantime, I have just one very small quibble: I think it is misleading for Rosenfeld – like the late Lawrence Stone ('Interpersonal Violence in English Society, 1300–1980', *Past and Present* 101, 1983: 22–33) – to categorise Elias's theory simply as a 'cultural'. As Rosenfeld himself implies, 'cultural' explanations usually take 'culture' as something given, like something in the air or the water that infects people. The theory of civilising processes, in contrast, seeks to explain *how* and *why* changes in culture and habitus arise out of (and in turn feed back into) changes in the social – including economic and political – structures of interdependence.

SJM



Helmut Kuzmics & Roland Axtmann, *Autorität, Staat und Nationalcharakter. Der Zivilisationsprozess in Österreich und England 1700–1900.* [Figurationen: Schriften zur Zivilisations- und Prozesstheorie 2] Opladen: Leske + Budrich 2000. viii + 427 pp. ISBN: 3-8100-2967-X

This is a far-reaching and ambitious book. It extends Elias's historical account of the origins of state authority and national character from its original, largely Francophone base into an analysis of English and Austrian sources for the period 1700–1900, compares the two cultures and suggests how their findings are exemplified in the two literatures. That the authors make sense of various works of literature by using the concept

of national character is ample testimony to the strength of the theoretical framework. They refer not only to canonical, but to popular literature (a pity the authors regard Karl May as the geographically nearest popular author and do not use Sealsfield), and occasionally glance across (as representatives of the comparison around which the book is constructed) at travellers from one culture in the other. Only an ideal reader (certainly not this reviewer) could survey the whole range of the book with equal expertise: clearly, sociologists will read not only the historical sociology but the accounts of the literary examples with profit, while literary scholars will certainly greatly benefit from the historical sociology. Rather than attempt to cover the book's range, this review briefly questions the function which the authors ascribe to literature.

There is no doubt but that the cautionary remarks made clear in the introduction are well taken. The complexity of literature's 'inner data' on which the sociologist may work can hardly be exaggerated, and it is also wise to assume that descriptions serve as commentaries, that not all reflection mirrors, and that a successful work of fiction will show 'tendencies rather than a correct reproduction of reality' (p. 23). Whether that differentiation will be meaningful to literary historians (even to those who have abandoned any Hegelian fusion of the two in the style of Lukács), or whether the complex and numerous layers of time which run through the literary work (Bloch's analysis of the *Ungleichzeitigkeit* of so much nineteenth century fiction offers useful clues here), and, finally, whether the *origins* of the commentaries are not so varied as almost to invalidate the category – literary historians who read this work may need to reflect on such points.

One particular issue dominates English literature in the second half of the period discussed. It is understandable that the authors do not often echo the critique which we owe to Edward Said. But Said's interest is in relating high literature to low. For him the differentiated aesthetes who appeared not to assent to the violence conducted in the Empire in their name are, in their fundamental assent to this violence, no different to the

Kiplings and C.S. Forresters from whom Kuzmics and Axtmann so productively draw their material. Quite apart from the fascinating questions as to whether the class-structure exported to the colonies is identical to the home-based system – the discussion of colonial encounters with the Masai suggest that (p. 247), although much of Kipling's work (including *Stalky & Co*) bases on a critique of traditional structures – the literary reader may question to what extent this book offers explanations of the consensus about imperialism which dominated nineteenth-century literature, and (more importantly) whether such answers can fairly be expected from work of this kind.

It is a happy day when literary and sociological studies come together, not in a shotgun marriage of fashion and convenience but in recognition of common purposes and methods. This book deserves – quite apart from its sociological public – a wide readership in literary studies, and the routes on which the authors invite their readers to continue to think promise to be as productive as the book itself.

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Annette Treibel, Helmut Kuzmics and Reinhard Blomert, eds, *Zivilisations- theorie in der Bilanz: Beiträge zum 100. Geburtstag von Norbert Elias*. Opladen: Leske & Budrich, 2000. 331 pp. ISBN: 3-8100-2038-9. [Figurationen: Schriften zur Zivilisations- und Prozesstheorie 1]

The papers collected here are from the Elias centenary conference, held at the Zentrum für Interdisziplinäre Forschung, Bielefeld on 20–22 June 1997 (see full report in *Figurations* 8), specifically from Group I, convened by Annette Treibel on the theme of 'Reflexion–Revision–Future of the Theory of Civilising Processes'. The first group of papers deals specifically with aspects of Elias's life and work (Hackeschmidt on his early Zionism, Merz-Benz on his 'philosophy of history', and Anders on progress and the problem of teleology). The next is concerned with Elias in the context of other theories (Hinz comparing him with Mühl-

mann and Duerr; Axtmann with other theorists of state formation; Van Krieken with Parsons; and Smith with Foucault).

The third group is entitled 'history of civilisation and national habitus (Mastenbroek on negotiation; Buckley on *Minnesang*; Krüger on sport, habitus and state formation in Germany; Kuzmics on Austria; and Greiffenhagen on the Germans). The final group of two chapters is concerned with the state of research on, and the reception of, the theory of civilising processes (Kuzmics again on criteria for testing the theory; and Blomert's report on the coverage of Elias's centenary in the German press). The book is mainly in German, although the chapters by Roland Axtmann, Robert van Krieken, Dennis Smith, Willem Mastenbroek and Ann Buckley are published in English.

This volume is the first in a projected series from Leske & Budrich under the title 'Figurations: Writings on the Theory of Civilising Processes and Process Sociology' (the German title, given above, is more parsimonious than my rough translation). The second volume in the series, published simultaneously, is the outstanding comparative study of national habitus in Austria and Britain by Helmut Kuzmics and Roland Axtmann, reviewed above by Hugh Ridley.

SJM



Kenneth Bishop, *Damaged Group Interdependencies within Conflict-Ridden Societies: The Social Construction of the Northern Irish Protestant Habitus*. Unpublished PhD thesis, Queen's University of Belfast, 1999.

Abstract: The Donegall Pass is a Protestant working class district in South Belfast. In total the Donegall Pass is appropriately half a mile square with a population of about two thousand mainly Protestant residents. Since the late 1960s urban redevelopment and the 'Troubles' has changed the social geography and personality of the Donegall Pass community. The community views itself as being historically and culturally neglected. Residents see themselves still as being under 'threat' from not only the sur-

rounding Roman Catholic communities but also now from the British government and their own traditional political representatives. There is a sense in which the present community is trying to resuscitate a dying age of collective civic pride and political power against the background of the need to survive as a group, while still trying to retain a certain amount of territorial and personal integrity.

This thesis traces the social construction of this community's political habitus from its transition from a vibrant community in the early 1960s to the development of its present warrior regime. It is also argued that the political habitus of Donegall Pass community can be characterised by the continual struggle for the monopolisation of power and the attempts by the community's 'established' Protestant population to defend itself against real and perceived cultural 'outsiders' and recent political changes in Northern Irish society.



Wouter Gomperts, 'Dysciviliation and dysmentalisation: The derailment of the civilising process from a psychoanalytic perspective'. *Amsterdams Sociologisch Tijdschrift* 27 (3) 2000.

Is massive organized violence and destruction a manifestation of 'modernity' or rather its total opposite 'a breakdown of civilisation'? De Swaan's concept of 'dysciviliation' transcends this opposition: At the core of the civilising process, sometimes a contrary current manifests itself allowing extreme violence on a mass scale to be perpetrated towards specific categories of people, while civilised relations and modes of expression are maintained in other sections of society. Compartmentalisation is the social arrangement and the psychic mechanism par excellence in a dysciviling society. To maintain it requires both rigid separations and carefully staged passages between the civilised and decivilised emotional and interactional domains. It is argued that for the perpetrators a developmental defect in mentalising capacity or reflective function ('non-mentalisation') strongly facilitates the perpetrator's psychological separation of their expe-

riences in the sites of destruction from all other mental processes or social encounters. For the majority of people who are not victims of barbarism, have no participation in it and do not oppose it, the integration of the genocidal violence in their personal and collective self-image includes a partial and selective decline in mentalising capacity. These disorders in mentalisation ('dysmentalisation') are described in both their psychological and social origins.

This article is one of a symposium on De Swaan's article 'Dysciviliatie, massavernietiging en de staat', *AST* 26 (3) 1999 (see *Figurations* 12). Other contributors are Mattijs van den Bosch and Geert de Vries, and there is a rejoinder by De Swaan. English abstracts for these contributions are not available.



Arjan Post, 'Is het informaliseringsproces van richting veranderd?: "Margriet Weet Raad, 1978-1998"'. [Has the informalisation process changed direction?: Changes in power balances, morals and manners in a Dutch agony column, 1978-1998]. *Amsterdams Sociologisch Tijdschrift* 27 (4) 2000: 446-76.

Arjan Post's article presents an interesting continuation of a discussion about informalisation processes that has been going on for a quarter of a century. In 1976, Christien Brinkgreve and Michel Korzec posed the question 'Kan het civilisatieproces van richting veranderen?' (Can the Civilising Process change direction? - *Amsterdams Sociologisch Tijdschrift* 3 (3) 1976: 361-4) and followed it up with a book length study of advice given from 1938 to 1978 by the agony aunt in the Dutch women's magazine *Margriet* (*Margriet weet raad*, 1978). Cas Wouters and others entered into the debate, and there emerged a degree of consensus that the so-called 'permissive society' did not represent a simple reversal, but rather - in certain respects - a complex continuation of the civilising process.

Post has now examined the advice given in *Margriet* over the two decades since Brinkgreve and Korzec's study. In the moral alarm that arose in public opinion in the 1980s and 1990s, one can perceive

a paradox. In daily life many examples can be found of the ongoing 'emancipation of emotions' on the one hand, and the rise of the quest for law and order on the other. To what extent is the interpretation of informalisation still adequate? In the new material, from *Margriet* 1978-98, principally focused on sexes and generations, a shift towards 'reformalisation' can be observed. Limits are no longer being explored, but once more being emphasised. An increasing discomfort in the collective mind ever since the 1980s - related to topics like the economy, unemployment, criminality, but also emancipation disillusion - is attended by a stronger emphasis on conducting and taking account of each other. Together these changes can be conceptualised as a shift from 'psychologisation' towards 'sociologisation', as Cas Wouters and Hans-Peter Waldhoff (in his book *Fremde und Zivilisierung*, 1995) have suggested. The answers in the agony column no longer give priority to the exploration of individual bounds or individual motives. Instead the societal 'context' of problems, relations and strivings is stressed. Meanwhile an ongoing liberation of sexuality in monogamous relationships can be noticed. People are stimulated to say what they 'really want' and to discover 'new points of view' - provided that 'the other' is taken into account. The 'emancipation of emotions' is, in this case, evident. Together with the rising quest for law and order, this may be defined as the paradox of informalisation and reformalisation. In this article the two trends are interpreted as intertwined. According to Norbert Elias, they indicate a shift of the We-I balance of individuals towards the 'we'. [Supplemented abstract]

SJM



Cas Wouters, 'Manners', in Peter N. Stearns, ed., *Encyclopaedia of European Social History: From 1350 to 2000*, vol. IV, § 17 'Body and Mind', pp. 371-82. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 2000.

In a masterly brief survey, Wouters discusses: the function of manners; the study of manners (from Huizinga and Elias to Curtin, Davidoff, Krumrey and -

of course – Wouters himself); the period of courts and courtesy; from courtesy to etiquette; the expansion of ‘good society’; the formalising process; the twentieth century (a long-term process of informalisation with reformalising phases).

SJM

■ AUTHORS’ ANNOUNCEMENTS



Johan Goudsblom, *Die Entdeckung des Feuers*. Frankfurt am Main und Leipzig: Insel Verlag, 2000.

This is a re-issue of the Goudsblom’s *Feuer und Zivilisation* – or, in English, *Fire and Civilisation*. Welcome as it is to have the book available again, the author did not authorise the change of title. The title page also announced that the book was translated ‘aus dem Niederlaendischen’ by Heike Hammer and Elke Korte. So far as we know, Heike and Elke do not know much Dutch – they translated it from the English, which, in any case, Joop Goudsblom wrote simultaneously with his Dutch version.



Philip Carter, *Men and the Emergence of the Polite Society in Britain 1660-1800*. London, Longman, 2000. 240pp.

This book, by the Research Editor of the *New Dictionary of National Biography*, presents an account of masculinity in eighteenth century Britain. In particular it is concerned with the impact of an emergent polite society on notions of manliness and the gentleman.

From the seventeenth century a new type of social behaviour, politeness, was promoted by diverse writers based on continental ideas of refinement. It stressed the merits of genuine and generous sociability as befitted a progressive and tolerant nation. Early eighteenth century writers encouraged men to acquire the characteristics of politeness by becoming urbane town gentlemen. Later commentator promoted an alternative culture of sensibility typified by the man of

feeling. Central to both was the need to spend more time with women, now seen as key agents of refinement. The relationship demanded a reworking of what it meant to be manly.

Being manly and polite was a difficult balancing act. Refined manliness presented new problems for eighteenth-century men. What was the relationship between politeness and duplicity? Were feminine actions such as tears and physical delicacy acceptable or not? Critics believed polite society led to effeminacy, not manliness and condemned this failure of male identity with reference to the fop. This book reveals the significance of social over sexual conduct for eighteenth century definitions of masculinity. It shows how features traditionally associated with nineteenth century models were well established in the earlier figure of the polite town dweller or sentimental man of feeling. Using personal stories and diverse public statements drawn from conduct books, magazines, sermons and novels, this is a vivid account of the changing status of men and masculinity as Britain moved into the modern period.

■ BIBLIOGRAPHICAL RETROSPECT

Julius Stenzel, *Philosophie der Sprache*. Munich & Berlin: Oldenbourg Verlag 1934

One of Norbert Elias’s schoolteachers at the Johannesgymnasium in Breslau was Julius Stenzel, whom he mentioned very favourably in his ‘Notizen zum Lebenslauf’ as someone who helped raise his interest in the literature of antiquity. Reinhard Blomert has managed to find Stenzel’s book recently in a second-hand bookseller’s shop in Berlin and I am grateful to him that he has made it accessible to me. It seems that this book (or Stenzel’s thinking as a whole) could have had some relevance for Elias’s thinking, particularly for his application of *Gestalttheorie* to sociological thinking and for his idea of what a Philosophy of Language is (which might be relevant for *The Symbol Theory* and its terminology. A more thorough discussion is not possible here, and I only want

to refer to the main terms and subjects as listed in the contents: Stenzel gives an Introduction and places the philosophy of language in the context of linguistics, psychology and psychopathology; deals with the limits of language, referring to music and language, to the *Lautgesten* (= sound gestures), the ‘melody of language’ (or *Klanggestalt*), and to the rhythm of language. Language is seen as both denotative and expressive and also as embedded in *Gemeinschaft*, community. Then there are chapters on sentence and words, grammar and its relationship to *flektierenden Sprachen*; on meaning, on metaphors, on *Klang und Bedeutung* (= sound and meaning), finally on style, the mother tongue and *Weltauffassung*, a typically German concept. Here, Stenzel deals with the connections between poetic language, the language of everyday life and with language and cognition (*Erkenntnis*). The book (dedicated to Stenzel’s students in Kiel) is certainly a very interesting document and deserves closer scrutiny.

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■ WORK IN PROGRESS

Tom Scheff, University of California Santa Barbara, invites readers of *Figurations* to offer their comments and suggestions on the following research project to:
scheff@sscf.ucsb.edu

Historical Changes in Emotions in Popular Songs

Problem: Theorists have argued that modern civilisation curtails the expression of emotion. For Freud (1930) civilisation was tantamount to repression of feeling and desire. In this vein, Freud had many followers, such as Reich, Marcuse, and others. Elias (2000) was more specific, suggesting that modernization curtailed expression of anger and therefore aggression, at least in face-to-face encounters. He also proposed that the expression of shame and embarrassment were being curtailed. Another widely held thesis asserts a historical shift from shame to guilt. Finally, it has been proposed that curtailment of the expression of shame leads to violence. These ideas

have been stated only in broad terms, and without convincing evidence. The most cogent argument is by Elias (2000), who analysed excerpts from advice manuals in five European languages over a span of seven centuries. But he recognized that his analysis was only suggestive.

The hypothesis that *modern civilisation curtails the expression of emotion*, if true, could be important in many areas, such as child-rearing, psychotherapy, education, crime control and conflict resolution. Psychotherapy, for example is divided between schools of thought that consider emotion (e.g., psychoanalysis, catharsis, Gestalt) and those that do not (e.g., behaviourist, cognitive, and narrative therapies). Findings supporting the curtailment hypothesis might imply support for the emotion-oriented therapies, as well as changes in other areas.

Another example: managing intense emotions is a key concern in resolving protracted conflict. But most current training and literature on mediation and conflict resolution gives very little attention to emotions, perhaps making mediation less effective than it could be (Retzinger and Scheff 2000). Another hypothesis is that curtailment of the expression of shame gives rise to violence (Gaylin 1884; Scheff 1994; Elias 1996; Gilligan 1996). This idea suggests an inverse correlation between changes in the yearly rates of violent crime and the expression of shame. The curtailment hypothesis is a very general statement about social process in modern civilisations.

I have found only one study that seriously attempts to document the curtailment thesis, an historical study of attitudes toward anger in the United States over the last two centuries (Stearns and Stearns 1986). They examined a very large number of texts, including advice manuals, diaries, and secondary studies. Their findings support the hypothesis with regard to anger. They report that early in the nineteenth century, only excessive anger was condemned. Righteous anger was not only not condemned, but even encouraged. Toward the middle of the nineteenth century, however, they suggest that intolerance of any kind of anger began to arise, and continues, increasingly, into the twentieth century. The Stearns admit that their study had many shortcomings. For example, they

mention 'inability to establish the representativeness of any given source' and lack of explicit coding procedures ('Often the researcher is forced to reason from brief comments on subtopics (e.g. temper tantrums), circumlocutions, ... and from the outright absence of comment where it should be logically expected' 1986, p. 249). The names of most of the many documents they examined are not stated or even enumerated, and the method of coding anger not made explicit. For these and other reasons, the reliability of their findings cannot be assessed.

Another limitation of the Stearns's study is that it concerns only anger, leaving out other emotions. Unlike Elias, for whom the rising threshold against the expression of shame was a key feature of the civilising process, the Stearns have little to say about shame, its siblings and cousins like embarrassment, humiliation, guilt, envy, etc. or grief, fear, pride and love. Expert opinion now holds that the various emotions interact, particularly anger with the shame family, contempt and disgust. If we are to study changes in emotional expression, it would be advantageous to include several emotions, not just one. Determining simultaneous historical changes in several emotions could discriminate between various theses. For example, has there been a shift from shame to guilt, or decreasing expression of all the emotions?

Method: For the proposed study, I will use the top 40 songs on the charts in the US for the last 70 years (1930–99) from the website Lyrics World (2000). Since only the most popular songs make the charts, they form what sociologists call collective representations, social facts that extend beyond the desires of particular individuals. These lyrics form a bounded and replicable domain. About 11,000 titles and 9,000 lyrics are available on this website. These lyrics represent 91% of the total lyrics (that are not duplicates: very popular songs sung by different artists in the same year).

From the preliminary study that I have carried out, it appears that lyrics for the period 1930–1960 were much more likely to mention emotion and feeling names than later lyrics (e.g.: *With each*

word your tenderness grows, tearing my fear apart... The Way You Look Tonight 1936). A few lyrics from the earlier period describe the hiding of feeling (Laughing on the Outside, Crying on the Inside 1946), but there seems to be many more in the later period, such as the following:

I pretended I'm glad you went away
These four walls closin' more every day
And I'm dying inside
And nobody knows it but me
(Nobody Knows 1996).

Seemingly absent from the earlier period are lyrics that renounce all feeling, like those in 'What's Love Got to Do with It?' (Who needs a heart when a heart can be broken? Tina Turner 1984) and 'I am a Rock' (Simon and Garfunkel 1965)

I've built walls,
A fortress deep and mighty,
That none may penetrate.
I have no need of friendship; friendship causes pain.

It's laughter and it's loving I disdain.
To describe extreme conditions of no feeling, in 1986 a new psychiatric diagnosis was established, alixithymia (Krystal 1988), because of the increase in the number of such patients.

I would use first a quantitative, then a qualitative, method to identify emotion markers, as Lewis did in her magisterial study of shame and guilt in psychotherapy sessions (1971).

This method will be an actual test of the theses discussed above: the Stearns on anger, Elias and others on anger and shame, and the Freud/Reich/Marcuse hypothesis on all emotions and affects. It will also determine the interrelations of changes in the numbers of marker of the six emotions and affects. These interrelations would show whether guilt markers increase as shame markers decrease, as has been claimed, and whether anger and shame markers decrease together, as I (Scheff 1994) and others (Lewis 1971) have proposed. Finally, I will also determine the correlations between emotion markers in lyrics and rates of violent crimes. These kinds of assessment have never been attempted before.

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■ FORTHCOMING CONFERENCES

Collectivity and Individuality in Groups and Organisations 30th International Summer School Berlin, 7–16 August 2001

Group Dynamics Section of the German Association for Group Psychotherapy and Group Dynamics (DAGG)
European Academy Berlin

The theme of the 30th annual International Berlin Summer School, a theme-centred group dynamics seminar is 'Col-

lectivity and Individuality in Groups and Organisations', a topic which is inspired by Norbert Elias.

The participants are from Western Europe, from Russia and other Eastern European and non-European Countries and represent a wide scope of professional backgrounds. The seminar provides an opportunity for intercultural learning, bridging boundaries in culture, language and profession. One group will be conducted in English, the other in German.

The conference is a non-profit operation, which means we are trying to keep tuition low. We want to keep the seminar open for people with only little money and specially for colleagues from countries with different socio-economical conditions than ours, for example all the countries of Eastern and South-eastern Europe. For this aim the organisers offer partial bursaries and scholarships.

Information:
www.gruppensdynamik-dagg.de/isk2001
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Decline of violent crime

Richard Rosenfeld, Professor of Criminology and Criminal Justice at the University of Missouri–St. Louis is hoping to organise a conference on the civilising process and the decline of violent crime in the USA. We hope to be able to notify more specific details in *Figurations* 16.

■ CONTRIBUTIONS TO FIGURATIONS

The next issue of *Figurations* will be mailed in November 2001. News and notes should be sent to the Editors by 1 October 2001.

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

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