

Figurations

Newsletter of the Norbert Elias Foundation

EDITOR'S NOTES

Abraham van Stolk



It is with great sadness that we have to report the death of Bram van Stolk, one of the Elias Trustees, in Amsterdam on 20 November.

An obituary will appear in *Figurations* 7.

Centenary Conferences

Preparations proceed apace for the various celebrations of the centenary of Norbert Elias's birth. Latest details of the centenary events are set out in the 'Centenary Supplement' at the back of this issue.

There have been some changes – a certain thinning out the field. Most sadly, the Latin American conference being organised by Vera Weiler and her colleagues in Colombia has had to be cancelled. Speakers had been invited and – it was thought – finance secured. But then suddenly, in consequence of the Colombian government's budget retrenchments, the money was quite suddenly withdrawn, and all arrangements had to be cancelled. Vera (needlessly) sends her apologies to all who had so willingly

agreed to attend, and I am sure we all send her our sympathy.

For similar financial reasons, the conference which Paul Nixon and Ann Buckley were organising in Cambridge has also been cancelled.

The conference in Bielefeld will now have just two working groups rather than the three envisaged at first.

A booklet outlining all centenary events in 1997 will be prepared early in the year and circulated to all recipients of *Figurations*.

If you wish to take part in any of the events listed – either to give a paper or simply to attend – you should contact the organisers in question. Full contact details are given inside.

Associate Editor Sought

With a mass of other responsibilities, I am finding it quite difficult to edit two issues of *Figurations* a year single-handed. I should like to hear from anyone willing to assist me in the task. Initial responsibilities would include chasing contributors who fail to deliver! Contact me at Stephen.Mennell@ucd.ie or at the address given on the back page. The appointment will be made by the Elias Trustees.

Stephen Mennell

SOCIAL PROCESSES – A NEW JOURNAL?

Publishers have approached me, expressing interest in a possible new journal, probably to be called *Social Processes*. A few of us 'figurationists' have been discussing this suggestion on and off for more than two years, without coming to a firm decision. It now seems appropriate to sketch in *Figurations* the pros and cons of such a journal, with the intention of seeking expressions of opinion, and expressions of interest in being involved if it is decided to go ahead.

The initial approach arose out of a perceived gap in the market for a journal for historical sociologists. Two existing journals, the *Journal of Historical Sociology* and *Comparative Studies in Society and History* are well-established and admirable, but could be said to have their own distinctive agendas.

It follows from that that publishers would not be keen to publish a new journal – *Social Processes* – which also had a narrow agenda. That is no problem from the point of view of myself and those other 'Eliasians' with whom I have discussed the matter. Our agenda would be a broad one of encouraging processual thinking in the social sciences, and it is easy to see how people from other theoretical traditions – world systems theory, for instance – could fit into an editorial team. Our own interests tend to be towards long-term social processes, but as Andrew Abbott of the University of Chicago has

pointed out, processual conceptualization may be applied to sequences of events whose duration varies between minutes and centuries.

But, if we wanted nevertheless to create a journal that would be attractive to 'figurationists', it could not be narrowly *sociological*, because our network includes anthropologists, historians, psychologists, and political scientists, among others. There is plainly a problem of adjusting the focal length of the apparatus!

There are other practical problems. The Elias-gang, as I sometimes call them, have fallen into the habit of publishing in a wide variety of journals, but especially in *Theory, Culture and Society* and the *Amsterdams Sociologisch Tijdschrift*. Especially through *TCS* a wide audience is reached. Would there be any point in risking the ghettoization of 'figurational' research by publishing it in a new journal that would initially

have a much smaller circulation?

Finally, starting a new journal in a financial climate where in most countries university libraries are cancelling existing journal subscriptions rather than ordering new ones would require enormous commitment by the Editor and the members of the editorial board. Whenever the subject comes up, the fickle finger of fate seems to point at me as Editor! But, as long as I am a Head of Department (and that's indefinitely), I can't possibly take on yet another task.

So let's have a wider discussion about this. And, if there is enthusiasm for the idea, let's also have some volunteers. Write to me, or better still – so that everyone can join in the discussion – send messages to the Elias-I e-mail discussion list, at:

Elias-I@hearn.nic.surfnet.nl

Stephen Mennell

■ SCHEFF ON PART/ WHOLE ANALYSIS – A TASTING PIECE

Thomas J. Scheff, *Emotions, the Social Bond, and Human Reality: Part/Whole Analysis*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, forthcoming, 1997
To whet readers' appetites for Tom Scheff's provocative new book, here are some 'bleeding chunks' from Tom's Introduction:

This book outlines and gives examples of a new approach to research in the human sciences. It puts into practice the recommendation of C. Wright Mills, for what he called the exercise of the sociological imagination. But I would call it instead the interdisciplinary, human imagination. Here I develop and elaborate ideas that were proposed in an early form in my *Microsociology* (1990) and in Suzanne Retzinger's *Violent Emotions* (1991). My goal is to describe an approach to research that allows the interpenetration of theory, method, and data in such a way that each equally casts light on the other, generating a theory that is based directly on observations of actual human behaviour, both inner experience and outer conduct.

At the heart of my approach is what I call part/whole morphology. I borrow the idea of morphology from botany, where it has long formed the foundation of that discipline. In botanical research, the study of single cases (single spe-

cimens of plants) is just as important as making comparisons between plants. Morphology is based equally on single cases and comparative study. By microscopic study of the smallest details of a single plant, the botanist learns how it works as a system, even if no other specimens are available. To the extent that other specimens are available, microanalysis and comparative study can be interwoven, each building on the other. Botany is the study of both individual and groups of plants.

Although not discussed as such, botanical morphology employs what might be called part/whole analysis, since it is concerned with relating the 'least parts', the tiniest details of an individual plant, with the 'greatest wholes', the structure and process of plant communities, and their relationship to their environment. ... The phrase 'least parts and greatest wholes' is due to the philosopher Spinoza, who proposed that human understanding requires relating the least parts

to the greatest wholes. Spinoza's proposition forms the basis of this book. As Spinoza suggested and as recent research demonstrates, human beings and human relationships are so complex as to require part/whole analysis, even in cases of simple, everyday interaction. ...

The approach outlined here is one that attempts to generate increasingly accurate and general hypotheses by close examination of the actual reality of social life. By grounding investigation in examination of the 'minute particulars' as Blake said, the least parts of single cases, and later in the comparison of these cases with one another in the context of ever larger wholes, one may generate hypotheses that are general and important. As pointed out, quantitative analysis leads to verification or disconfirmation of a hypothesis. But verification is the third step in part/whole morphology. Before taking the last step, it is usually necessary to explore at least several of the earlier steps: exploration (conventional eyewitness field work using qualitative methods), microanalysis of single specimens and comparison of specimens. ...

In Elias's magisterial study of the civilizing process, he first analyzed excerpts from advice manuals from the same historical era in each of four European languages. These excerpts represent specimens from the thirteenth through the eighteenth century. He also examined excerpts in the same four languages from the nineteenth century, showing a decided change in emotional content. His method involves both single cases and comparisons of cases in different languages and historical eras. For these reasons, his results are specific, general and important. But like literary analysts, his theory and method are not made explicit. Probably for that reason, his work has failed to have the impact it should have had.

In the approach advocated here, since verbatim texts are used, the researcher (and the reader) has the advantage of direct eye-witness observation of the behaviour under consideration, as in the best qualitative methods. The researcher has access to features of the text which are often ignored by the participants, and to instant replay, which is also seldom available to the participants. If as suggested in the chapters that follow, the researcher provides the reader with a comprehensive de-

scription of the methods employed, the study, like quantitative methods, offers the reader exact definitions of concepts and procedures. ...

The idea of parts and wholes is very powerful, but it is also quite abstract. It may be the most general framework possible. It needs to be shown how it applies to real human activity in diverse settings, fleshing it out with actual speech and gestures, as interpreted in context. ... Spinoza ... reasoned that human understanding requires knowledge of the 'least parts and the greatest wholes' and the relationship between them.

This idea leads to the very heart of human reflexivity: when we are thinking clearly, we carefully relate ourselves to both the microcosm and the macrocosm. This movement clarifies what it is that we are doing, it makes contact with efforts of others, and makes our thoughts maximally useful. It is at the same time a declaration of both dependence and independence. To use

Elias's favourite word, it is a declaration of interdependence, of unity and difference. This idea suggests a way of correcting for the overspecialization of knowledge in the modern world. There is a joke among academics that they either know everything about nothing or nothing about everything. As in most jokes, there is some truth to this one. There are the parts people, who know everything about next to nothing, and the wholes people, who know next to nothing about everything. By struggling to relate parts to larger wholes (the empiricists in psychology and history, for example) and wholes to the parts of which they are to be composed (theorists in the human sciences and the humanities), perhaps at least some of the alienation and waste motion in our attempts to understand the human world can be overcome.

The full text of the Introduction can be had by e-mail on request from: scheff@alishaw.sscf.ucsb.edu

■ ELIAS AND OLSCHKI

During his time at Heidelberg between 1924 and 1930 Elias was accepted for habilitation with Alfred Weber. He participated in Weber's seminars on cultural sociology, and began a study on 'The Emergence of Modern Science'; the text of his seminar paper on this subject recently came to light in the papers of Alfred Weber.

Elias took many of the details of his paper from the work of Leonardo Olschki. Olschki, the son of a Jewish antiquarian from Florence, was Professor of Romance Philology at Heidelberg. A widely educated man, he had written three volumes entitled *Geschichte der neusprachliche wissenschaftliche Literatur*. In this work, Olschki presents the thesis that the beginning of modern science could not evolve out of the scholastic university milieu. It developed rather in circles of practitioners – the *experimentierende Meister* – who were, as Elias stresses, at once craftsmen and artists. Elias points to the gap between the vertical, God-centred medieval thinking and the horizontal world view of the rising epoch of the Renaissance,

which for him represented a new stage in the history of thought.

Olschki is now forgotten. He had to leave Germany in 1933, and never sought to return after the war. He gave up writing in German, and these three volumes never appeared in English.

The text of Elias's seminar presentation will be published in Reinhard Blomert, *Der gescheiterte Epochwechsel: Studien über die Heidelberger Sozialwissenschaften der Zwischenkriegszeit* ('The Failed Change: Studies on the Social Sciences in Heidelberg between the Wars'), forthcoming 1997.

[Details of Olschki's three volumes are: Bd. I, *Die Literatur der Technik und der angewandten Wissenschaften vom Mittelalter bis zum Renaissance*. Heidelberg, Carl Winter, 1918; Bd. II, *Bildung und Wissenschaft in Zeitalter der Renaissance in Italien*. Florenz, L.S. Olschki Verlag, 1922; Bd. III, *Galilei und seine Zeit*. Halle, M. Niemeyer, 1924]

Reinhard Blomert
Preußenallee 26
D-14052 Berlin

■ RECENT BOOKS AND ARTICLES

Johan Goudsblom, Eric Jones and Stephen Mennell, *The Course of Human History: Economic Growth, Social Process and Civilization*. Armonk, NY, M.E. Sharpe, 1996, viii + 156 pp. ISBN: 1-56324-793-3 (hb); 1-56324-794-1 (pb)

The celebrated economist Robert Heilbroner has recently written: 'Out of sheer self-protection I read most books less than once, quite content after the first chapter to spare my eyes. I read *The Course of Human History* twice – the first time with the sense that I was looking with astonishment into processes by which much social history has been – and undoubtedly still is – made; the second time for the sheer pleasure of reading again about the roots of economic growth long before the industrial revolution, the origins of early social stratification, of civilizing and decivilizing processes in Europe, Asia and elsewhere. I have not read so informative, imaginative, and engrossing a book for a very long time.'

The contents of *The Course of Human History* are:

Introduction: Bringing the Very Long Term Back In (*SJM*)

1. Human History and Long-Term Social Processes (*JG*)
2. Ecological Regimes and the Rise of Organised Religion (*JG*)
3. The Formation of Military-Agrarian Regimes (*JG*)
4. *Extensive* Growth in the Pre-Modern World (*ELJ*)
5. Recurrent Transitions to *Intensive* Growth (*ELJ*)
6. Civilizing and Decivilizing Processes (*SJM*)
7. Asia and Europe: Comparing Civilizing Processes (*SJM*)

The book is a thoroughly revised and updated version of the same authors' *Human History and Social Process* (Exeter, University of Exeter Press, 1989).

Gerhard Reinecke, *Thailands Weg zur Sozialversicherung Entscheidungsprozesse zwischen Demokratisierung und Militärputsch. Eine Analyse der Figuration strategischer Gruppen.* (Thailand's Way to Social Security - Decision Processes between Democratisation and Military Coup. An Analysis of the Figuration of Strategic Groups). Saarbrücken / Fort Lauderdale, Breitenbach, 1993. ISBN 3-88156-604-X, 154 pp., DM 29.80.

This book tries to analyse the decision processes leading to the introduction of the first social security scheme for private sector employees in Thailand, placing them in a broader context of democratisation and military coups in that country. The theoretical tool used to carry out this task is a synthesis of the "Concept of Strategic Groups" (first developed and used by authors at the Bielefeld Department of Development Sociology) and Elias's Figuration Theory.

In the author's opinion, this synthesis can help to overcome some problems of both approaches taken individually. The "Strategic Group" authors (Evers/Schiel 1988) did have some contact with Elias in Bielefeld during his time at the ZIF and mention his writings occasionally, although only Marx and Weber - and not Elias - are explicitly mentioned as important sources of theoretical inspiration. In spite of these references, the theoretical background remains somewhat shaky. Elias' figuration theory, on the other hand, is a powerful tool for the analysis of any "figuration of something" but can gain a lot by adding some precision on this "something". The book is thus an intent to analyse the figuration of interdependent strategic groups (defined as groups of persons that compete for material and immaterial resources in a society) in Thailand.

In addition to Elias's general figuration concept, his relational concept of power and his concept of "functional democratisation" (decreasing power differentials in asymmetrical relationships) complete the theoretical framework. The possibility of one particular group pushing through its demands does not only depend on its material and political resources (such as money, number of members, internal

unity, liberty for political action) but also on the shifting power balances between all the groups in the figuration.

The approach chosen in this book allowed an explanation to be given for the introduction of a social security scheme in 1990 after almost 60 years of vain efforts to be linked and the empirical case study to the broader context of power relations and democratisation in Thai society. The main weakness in theoretical terms refers to the formation and definition of groups. Although the Concept of Strategic Groups adds some guidelines to the very general statements given by Elias in this respect, the problem of linking subjective and objective dimensions of group formation into a coherent framework remains an important challenge.

[Author's Abstract. Address: International Labour Organisation, Luis Carrera 1131, Vitacura, Santiago, CHILE. Fax: + 56 - 2 - 201 20 31. Email: reincke@oitchile.cl

The author is interested in learning about other applications of Elias' theory to the analysis of political processes and power relations in industrialised as well as in developing countries.]

Éric Phélippeau, *Le Baron de Mackau en politique: Contribution à l'étude de la professionnalisation politique.* Thèse pour le doctorat de science politique, Université de Paris X - Nanterre, 1995.

Éric Phélippeau presented a notable paper on the sociogenesis of the professional politician in France at the Colloquium on 'Norbert Elias and Political Analysis' in La Défense in April 1994 (see *Figurations* 1). In a highly original fashion he drew on Norbert Elias's little-read 1950 paper on the origins of the naval profession to shed light on the competition between the gentleman amateur and the skilled professional in the very different context of late nineteenth-century French politics. Now he has successfully defended the ambitious thesis from which that paper was drawn.

In his thesis, Phélippeau asks: how are the changing conditions of success in electoral competition to be understood?

How was it that certain individuals rather than others came to anticipate and adapt to these changes? How did the advent of universal male suffrage in the second half of the nineteenth century help shape the specialist skills of vote-getting? And how was this specialist knowledge used by candidates in their practical experience of electoral battles?

These questions are explored with particular reference to the career of one individual politician, Baron Armand de Mackau (1832-1918). In answering them, a whole range of ideas drawn from the writings of Norbert Elias are deployed. The first part of the thesis is entitled 'The system of electoral expenses', which immediately cross-references Elias's famous account of the system of expenses in *The Court Society*, and under a section entitled 'the obligation to spend' there is a discussion of 'the double-bind mechanism'. The second part of the thesis deals with 'the rationalization of political work', and part of the discussion of electoral figurations draws on established-outsiders theory. I would not wish, however, to give the impression that this is a dogmatically Eliasian thesis (whatever dogmatic Eliasianism might look like!!), but it is a first-class example of the rich use to which students at Nanterre are putting Elias's writings in political science, under the leadership of Bernard Lacroix and Alain Garrigou among others.

Stephen Mennell

Jiri Šubrt, *Civilizační Teorie Norberta Eliase.* Prague, Univerzita Karlova, 1996. 106pp. ISBN: 80-7184-197-8

For his doctorate at the Charles University, Prague, Jiri Šubrt has written the first general introduction to the work of Norbert Elias in Czech. The chapters deal with Elias's career, the theory of civilizing processes, themes in his later work (sport, habitus, etc.), social processes and figurations (including established-outsiders relations, involvement and detachment), and civilizing processes at the end of the twentieth century (including informalization and barbarization processes). There is a brief English summary. This very welcome book is symptomatic of the way in

which Elias's ideas are now becoming available to students not just in the major world languages but in the 'small languages' too.

[Jiri Šubr's address is: Department of Sociology, Faculty of Philosophy, Charles University, Celetna 20, 116 36 Prague 1, Czech Republic]

Robert van Krieken, 'Proto-governmentalization and the historical formation of organizational subjectivity.' *Economy & Society* 25 (2) 1996: 195-221.

The definitional distinction made in organizational sociology, between organizations as entities directed towards the rational attainment of goals and a realm of society or culture which is not, results in an inadequate understanding of the relationship between organizational and extra-organizational subjectivity, and especially its historical development. This article examines the historical formation of organizational subjectivity, using Foucault's concept of government and Elias's concept of civilization, as well as the way their ideas might be interrelated and extended in analysing organizational life. It then addresses two problems which remain unresolved by this dual utilization of Foucault's and Elias's ideas in analysing organizational subjectivity: the question of contradictions within both governmentality and the civilizing process and that of the active contribution of the practices of the governed and the civilized. The concluding section introduces and argues for the concept of proto-governmentalization as a means of capturing the interplay between human subjects, organizations and wider networks of social relations.

R.E. Wiedenmann, 'Protestant sects, court society, and animal welfare: A comparative study of animal ethical aspects in the civilizing process.' *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie*, 48 (1) 1996: 35- [in German]

The study deals with the origins of the idea of animal welfare in the civilizing

process of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries: as cruelty to animals came under attack, this critique emerged not at the court society but in the milieu of the Protestant dissent. After a brief description of three characteristics shaping the modern conception of animal welfare, the view that popular cultures of early modern times had an inherent tendency to an emotionally unrestricted cruelty to animals is criticized. Varieties of human-animal relationships at the court society are depicted, especially cruelties framed by the symbolism of the chase. In contrast, the religiously motivated positions of the Protestant dissenters, particularly the Quakers, display not only an advanced 'ethical' view of man's 'fellow creatures' but also a tendency to monitor the animal-related behaviour reflexively. A last section clarifies the sociogenetic preconditions fostering the animal ethics of protestant dissent, especially the sectarian pattern of 'short' social interaction sequences. Some conditions of the social diffusion of the animal welfare idea during the eighteenth century are outlined.

■ BIBLIOGRAPHICAL RETROSPECT

Mario Biagioli, *Galileo, Courtier: The Practice of Science in the Culture of Absolutism*. Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1993. xii + 402 pp.

In the court of the Medici and the Vatican, argues Mario Biagioli, Galileo fashioned both his career and his science to the demands of patronage and its complex systems of wealth, power and prestige. Drawing extensively on Elias's *The Court Society* in this important study in the cultural and social history of science, the author shows how Galileo's courtly role was integral to his science.

We hope to include a brief article by Mario Biagioli in the next issue of *Figurations*.

Georg R. Gfäller, "Figuration": The Contribution of Norbert Elias to

Group Analysis and the Contribution of Group Analysis to the Social Sciences', *Group Analysis*, 26 (1993): 341-56.

Abstract: The theory of 'figuration' formulated by Norbert Elias is the basis of S.H. Foulkes's concept of group analysis and the group as network. The author assesses the importance of *The Civilizing Process* and of the 'critical theory' of the Frankfurt School with which they were both involved [*sic*] and discusses the application of group analysis to research and understanding in anthropology and other areas of social science.

■ FORTHCOMING CONFERENCES

The European Sociological Association - 3rd European Conference

The European Sociological Association will hold its third conference on 27-30 August 1997 at the University of Essex, Colchester, England. The conference theme is 'Twentieth-Century Europe: Inclusions/ Exclusions'.

Sessions will be organised around the following themes:

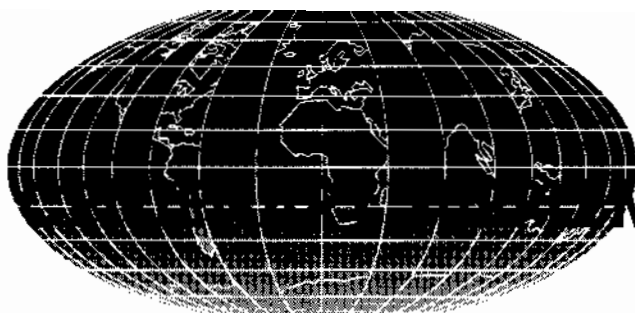
Revisiting Classical Theory
Work, Welfare and Citizenship
Inequalities Old and New
Globalizations
European Processes, Boundaries and Institutions
Cultures and Identities

Abstracts of papers for presentation at the conference should be sent not later than 15 January 1997 to:

Conference Organiser - ESA
Department of Sociology
University of Essex
Wivenhoe Park
Colchester, CO4 3SQ
UNITED KINGDOM
e-mail: ESA97@essex.ac.uk
Fax: +44-1206-873410

See also the call for papers by Kitty Verrips folded in this issue

ELIAS CONFERENCE



INTERDEPENDENCIES, FIRST NORTH AMERICAN NORBERT ELIAS CONFERENCE

The University of British Columbia, Vancouver, March 20–22,
1997

FOCUS

Is the world coming together or falling apart? At the end of the millennium the opposing paradigms of globalization and fragmentation compete: on the one hand the coalescence of developments regarding global economy, communication, and increasing mobility is reshaping the world; on the other, as political boundaries change, factors of culture and ethnicity come to the fore in often bloody and destructive ways.

A distinguished inter-disciplinary group of international authorities are coming together at this Conference to evaluate the contributions of Norbert Elias (1897–1990), one of the outstanding social thinkers of this century and to explore our understanding of the interdependence of individuals in our global society. Join these academics as they look at both civilizing and retrograde processes at the intersections between race, gender, class, nationality and technology at the turn of the century.

PROGRAMME

**THURSDAY EVENING, MARCH 20, 1997, Goethe-Institut,
944 West 8th Ave. Vancouver.**

- 7:15 pm Welcome, Director of Goethe-Institut
7:30 pm Hermann Korte, University of Hamburg
'A long life considered: Norbert Elias and the
theory of civilization'
8:30 pm Reception

**FRIDAY, MARCH 21, 1997 Green College (Coach House),
University of British Columbia**

- 9:00 am Opening remarks
Shirley Neuman, Dean of Arts, University of
British Columbia
Thomas Salumets, University of British Columbia
Hermann Korte, joint trustee of the Norbert Elias
Foundation, Amsterdam

Session I Green College (Coach House), University of British Columbia

9:30 am to 11:15 am

Godfried van Benthem van den Bergh, Erasmus University, Rotterdam, 'Nations as symbols and processes'
Annette Treibel, University of Karlsruhe, 'The changing balance of power between men and women. A figurational study on the public and the private sphere within western societies'
Reinhard Blomert, Berlin, 'The civilizing restraints of money'

11:15 am to 11:30 am Refreshment break

Session II Green College (Coach House), University of British Columbia

11:30 am to 12:45 pm

Thomas J. Scheff, University of California, Santa Barbara, 'Unpacking the Civilizing Process'
Thomas Kemple, University of British Columbia, 'The trials of Homo Clausus: Elias, Weber, and Goethe on the sociogenesis of the modern self'

12:45 pm to 2:00 pm Lunch

Session III Green College (Coach House), University of British Columbia

2:00 pm to 3:30 pm

Ann Buckley, Cambridge University, 'Interdependency and Medieval Studies'
Stephen Guy-Bray, University of British Columbia, 'Civilizing sexuality: Marie de France's lay with two names'

4pm to 6pm Tour of Museum of Anthropology (RSVP)

7pm to 9 pm Dinner Salmon House on the Hill, North Vancouver (RSVP)

SATURDAY, MARCH 22, 1997 Green College (Coach House), University of British Columbia

Session IV Green College, Coach House

10:00 am to 11:15 am

Stephen Mennell, University College Dublin, 'North America and the Civilizing Process'
Paul Nixon, Cambridge University, 'Kitsch and Western inter-

est in the Exotic'

11:15 am to 11:30 am Refreshment break

Session V, Green College, Coach House

11:30 am to 13:00 pm

Helmut Kuzmics, University of Graz, 'Sociology and Literature'

Rod Watson, University of Liège, 'Personal pronouns, roles and Human Figurations: A critical commentary on Norbert Elias's approach to language'

1:00 pm to 1:30 pm

Closing remarks: Stephen Mennell, University College Dublin,

Thomas Salumets, University of British Columbia

6:30 pm Dinner, Chinatown, Vancouver (RSVP)

Costs

All lectures are open to the public and ADMISSION is FREE

Organized by The Programme in Comparative Literature, University of British Columbia, 1866 Main Mall, Canada V6T 1Z1

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More Information

For more information contact Dr. Thomas Salumets, Chair, Programme in Comparative Literature. Information is also available online at <http://www.arts.ubc.ca/german/lps/elias.html>

THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE PARLIAMENTARY STATE ELIAS CENTENARY CONFERENCE, PARIS, 15-16 MAY 1997

This conference, the principal celebration of Elias's centenary in France, will focus on the relevance of his writings on state-formation to the development of the *modern* democratic state. It is being organised by Bernard Lacroix and Alain Garrigou. Further details from: Prof. Alain Garrigou, Groupe d'Analyse Politique, UFR de sciences juridiques et politiques, Université de Paris X - Nanterre, 200 Avenue de la République, F-92001 Nanterre Cedex, France. Tel. 00-33-1-409-77652; Fax: +33-1-40 97 76 56.

The provisional list of contributions includes:

C. Battais, 'La construction par l'Etat de l'image publique de l'Etat laïque.'

J.H. Bergeron, 'Le passage du *Standestaat* à l'Etat constitutionnel moderne comme modèle inspiré d'Elias pour la compréhension de la construction européenne'

J.-C. Bussière et C. Le Dignol, 'La Société d'Assemblée: la construction d'un espace de confrontation entre ressources sociales inégales'

A. Cohen, "'Faire l'Europe": De la concurrence au monopole dans la formation de la "Communauté" européenne'

G. Courty, 'L'uniforme ministériel'

M. Djaziri, 'Le modèle eliasien et les expériences parlementaires dans le monde arabe'

L. Dussoutour, 'La notabilisation comme tendance à la monopolisation du capital politique'

H. Fayat, 'Comment se tenir à l'Assemblée: la discipline en séance et la pacification des moeurs parlementaires'

M. Ferrière et A. Garrigou, 'Comment la démocratie vient aux enfants: expériences scolaires'

P. Juhem, 'Civiliser la banlieue: les dispositifs étatiques de contrôle de la violence urbaines dans les zones "pauvres"'

B. Lacroix, 'Les leçons de Norbert Elias pour l'analyse de la construction sociale de l'Etat parlementaire'

T. Madrid, 'Ledru-Rollin, artisan de la mise en forme de l'organisation électorale en 1848'

S.J. Mennell, 'La frontière de quoi? - la pacification et la démocratisation fonctionnelle dans la formation de l'Etat américain'

C. Voillot et L. Quero, 'Travail électorale et pratiques administratives disciplinaires à l'épreuve des élections censitaires'

ELIAS FOUNDATION CENTENARY CONFERENCE, BIELEFELD, 20-22 JUNE 1997

This conference will be held in the Zentrum für Interdisziplinäre Forschung, Bielefeld, where Norbert Elias spent the highly productive years 1978-84. Ending on the centenary date itself, the conference will be sponsored by the Elias Foundation and by the Department of Sociology, University of Bielefeld.

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.

The rest of the conference will take the form of a colloquium, with two working groups:

Working Group 1: REFLECTION, REVISION AND THE FUTURE

Convenor: Prof. Dr Annette Treibel, PH Karlsruhe, Postfach 4960, D-76032 Karlsruhe, Germany

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Elias's classic study *Über den Prozess der Zivilisation* is now nearly 60 years old. The debate about this *magnum opus* - like that surrounding comparable works, like Max Weber's *Protestant Ethic* - is never-ending. Debate continues about how the central theses, the empirical basis, and the adequacy of the conceptual models are to be assessed. Any synthesis as wide-ranging as Elias's - linking as it does psychology, literature, political history, social history, and theoretical models in micro- and macro-social contexts - exposes itself to critical evaluation by representatives of many different specialisms

and disciplines. That was true at the time it was written, but it must be even more so today. In view of the development of knowledge and science over the immense period of six decades, this working group will tackle the basic question: *What is the significance of the theory of the western courtly civilising process in the light of the state of research today?*

More specific facets of this basic question are:

the empirical confirmation or correction of the thesis of the courtly civilising process (manners, violence, sexuality, etc.) state-formation processes and feudalism: for example, explanations of French absolutism from the viewpoints of history and political science.

the civilising of emotions and changing feelings of shame: the findings of anthropology, psychology, social psychology, or the sociology of emotions.

comparisons of Eliasian methodology with contemporary approaches in historical and interpretative sociology.

philosophy and logic of history: the foundations of the theory of civilising processes.

the theory of civilising processes in comparison with (among other things) macro-social theories of development and historical sociology.

comparison with economic and other approaches to unintended consequences of human actions.

Participants from various disciplines will be able to draw on their specialist and methodological backgrounds in their reflections on, and revisions to, the theory. Contributions should be as specific and specialised as necessary, and as interdisciplinary and generally understandable as possible. The general outcome of this working group will be to frame the questions for a 'theory of civilizing processes for the future'.

The provisional list of contributions includes:

Roland Axtmann, 'The Contribution of Norbert Elias to the Debate on State Formation in Historical Sociology'

Stafan Böhm, Subject to be announced

Ann Buckley, 'Elias on *Minnesang* – a Reassessment

Robert van Krieken, 'Beyond the "Problem of Order": Elias and the Question of Habit'

Helmut Kuzmics, 'Nationaler Habitus und Handlungstheorie: Das Beispiel von Autorität und Selbstironie im österreichischen Charakter'

Willem F.G. Mastenbroek, Subject to be announced

Dennis Smith, 'The Civilizing Process and the Care of the Self – Elias and Foucault'

Working Group 2: DECIVILISING PROCESSES

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The notion of *decivilising* processes has in recent years become increasingly central to debates about the work of Norbert Elias. Criticisms of Elias's theory of civilising processes can be broadly divided into two categories. First, there are those (such as Hans-Peter Duerr) who, usually from a stand-

point of radical cultural relativism, simply deny that there was any such structured process of 'civilisation' as Elias identified, whether in Europe or elsewhere. Second and more important, there have always been critics who, even if they accepted the substantial validity of Elias's account of changes in the European habitus from the late Middle Ages up to the nineteenth century, argue that the trend was reversed in the twentieth; and, furthermore, that this invalidates a key element in Elias's theory, the connection he discerned between growing social complexity, lengthening chains of interdependence, and state formation process on the one hand, and changes in habitus on the other.

Early discussions of apparently decivilising trends include the debate about 'informalising' processes (Wouters, Brinkgreve, Kapteyn *et al.*), that about contemporary sports-related violence (Dunning *et al.*), and that about the consequences of nuclear weapons in the Cold War (Van Benthem van den Bergh, and Elias himself). More recently – especially since the publication of Elias's *Studien über die Deutschen / The Germans* – there has been a growing recognition of the need *always* to think in terms of a fluctuating balance between civilising and decivilising forces, which indeed presuppose each other.

The aim of this working group is decisively to advance the discussion of the connection between civilising and decivilising processes. It is hoped that participants may wish to apply the ideas to a range of contemporary social problems, to both the past and to contemporary processes such as 'globalisation', to non-European contexts, and perhaps to areas such as the effects of the media about which Elias and those influenced by him have hitherto had little to say.

The provisional list of contributions includes:

Godfried van Benthem van den Bergh, Subject to be announced

Artur Bogner, "'Tribal' wars in Northern Ghana in the late Twentieth Century"

Christien Brinkgreve, 'Recent Developments in the Relations between Men and Women and Parents and Children in the Light of the Theory of Civilizing and Decivilizing Processes'

José Esteban Castro, 'The Control of Water and the Civilizing Process: The Valley of Mexico, from the fifteenth to the nineteenth century'

Roger Chartier, Subject to be announced

Moncef Djaziri, 'The Figurational Dynamics of Colonial Stratification in the Middle East and its Effects on Contemporary Arab Societies: A Comparative Historical and Sociological Study'

Elçin Kürsat-Ahlers, 'The Process of Decivilization in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century in the Ottoman Empire'

Alain Garrigou, 'The Manners of Policial Activity: Emotions and Civility'

Dawud Gholamasud, 'Globalisierung und Islamisierung der Menschenrechte'

Peter Gleichmann, 'Are humans able to stop killing each other?'

Paul Kapteyn, 'The European Mutation; Dominant or Re-

cessive? – European Civilization in Global Perspective’
 Malcolm J. Kennedy, ‘The Interactive Process of War and Peace as Civilizing and Decivilizing Agents’
 Joseph Maguire, ‘Global Sports and Patriot Games: Diminishing Contrasts and Increasing Varieties’
 Dienie Nel, ‘The History of Conservation in South Africa in the Light of Elias’s Theories’
 Steven Russell, ‘Witch-hunting, Civilizing and Decivilizing Processes’
 Richard Sennett, ‘The Relationship between Mass Culture and Globalisation’
 Pieter Spierenburg, ‘The Problem of Violence – Historical Processes and Present Developments’
 Paul Stokes, Subject to be announced
 Arpad Szakolczai, ‘Decivilising Processes and the Dissolution of Order, with reference to the Case of Eastern Europe’
 Ton Zwaan, ‘State Disintegration, Violence and Decivilising Processes: Yugoslavia in the Perspective of the Theory of Civilizing Processes’

ELIAS CENTENARY SESSION AT THE ASA, TORONTO, 9-13 AUGUST, 1997.

Jorge Ardití and Stephen Mennell are organising a session at the American Sociological Association 1997 Annual Meeting in Toronto. 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

STUDENT CONFERENCE IN BELFAST 27 NOVEMBER 1997

Kenneth Bishop is organising a centenary conference on ‘Manners, Emotions and Sociological Theory’ at Queen’s University, Belfast. In recent years Norbert Elias’s writings have found themselves upon the teaching syllabuses of a number of Irish Universities: University College, Dublin; Queen’s University, Belfast and University of Ulster. The aim of the conference is to take the opportunity to build upon the already expanding undergraduate interest in Elias. Papers will be presented to Irish students by Johan Goudsblom, Stephen Mennell and Kenneth Bishop. Enquiries to Kenneth Bishop, Department of Sociology and Social Policy, Queen’s University of Belfast, Belfast BT7 INN, Northern Ireland. E-mail: K.Bishop@qub.ac.uk

ORGANIZED VIOLENCE: THE FORMATION AND BREAKDOWN OF MONOPOLIES OF FORCE – CONDITIONS AND CONSEQUENCES NORBERT ELIAS CENTENARY CONFERENCE 18-20 DECEMBER 1997 AMSTERDAM

One of the pioneering contributions of Norbert Elias was to show that the civilizing process in early modern Europe was inextricably connected with the process of state formation – the formation of increasingly more stable organizations exercising a monopoly of taxation and force over a relatively extensive territory. As Elias made quite clear, the civilizing process did not begin in Europe in the early modern age. Nor did the process of monopolization of organized violence. In order to explore his ideas and to further his approach, the Norbert Elias Centenary Conference in Amsterdam will focus on organized violence.

At the conference we propose to distinguish three stages in the development of monopolies of organized violence:

A stage in which organized violence became the monopoly of adult males, who excluded women and children from the use of weapons. Initiation rites and taboos served to uphold the adult males’ monopoly.

A stage in which organized violence became the monopoly of specialists, the warriors, to the exclusion of other adult males. This may be called the stage of military–agrarian societies, of which medieval Europe is an example.

A stage during which the relatively autonomous warrior elites were forced to yield the monopoly of violence to central state organizations. This is the process of state formation described by Elias for early modern Europe.

The three stages are part of a process model. We do not suggest that at any time a process of monopolization has been ‘completed’. On the contrary, it makes more sense to assume that throughout human history the monopolization processes have been accompanied by counter-tendencies veering toward undermining the established monopolies.

The three-stage model is intended to serve as an organizing principle for the plenary sessions of the conference. It may also serve as the organizing principle for some of the paper sessions. We expect that the model also may provoke discussion on the possibility that humankind is in the process of entering a fourth stage. If this indeed is so, the question arises of whether the model sketched above is of any help in understanding current developments.

We hope that, next to the plenary sessions, the thematic paper sessions will provide a forum and meeting point for all social scientists who are interested in the historical comparative approach that Norbert Elias has advocated. The organisers intend that no-one should feel excluded, so although the plenary programme will focus on organized violence the paper sessions will deal with other topics as well.

PRELIMINARY PLENARY PROGRAMME: Thursday 18 December 1997

- Chair: *Godfried van Benthem van den Bergh* (NL)
 14.00 Introduction (*Johan Goudsblom*, NL)
 14.35 Male monopolistic rituals (*Donald Glassman*, USA)
 Tea
 15.30 Male monopolies and collective fantasies (*H.U.E. Thoden van Velzen*, NL)
 16.05 The Formation of Warrior Societies: Contemporary Africa (*Paul Richards*)
 Break
 16.50 Forum with first discussant *Jojada Verrips* (NL) plus four invited speakers.

Friday 19 December 1997

- Chair: *Johan Goudsblom*, NL
 10.00 State Formation and Organized Violence in Japan (comp. to European Middle Ages) (*Johann Arnason*, Australia)
 10.35 State Formation and Organized Violence in China compared to Roman Empire (*S.A.M Adsheed*, UK)

- Coffee
 11.30 Byzantium and Contemporary Societies
 (*Judith Herrin*, USA)
- Lunch
 14.00 Civilisation and Organized Violence in the
 Ottoman Empire (*Elçin Kürsat-Ahlers*, Germany)
- 14.35 The Inca State (*Fred Spier*, NL)
- Tea
 15.30 Europe (*R.I. Moore*, UK)
- 16.05 Forum with first discussant *Randall Collins* plus
 invited speakers

Saturday 20 December 1997

- Chair: *Nico Wilterdink* (NL)
- 10.00 Organized Violence in a Frontier Society:
 the United States (*Stephen Mennell*, IRL)
- 10.35 Breakdown of State Monopolies: What happened
 to the USSR? (*Randall Collins*, USA)
- Coffee
 11.30 The Violent State and Supranational Monopolies
 of Violence (*Abram de Swaan*, NL)
- Lunch
 14.00 Challenges to State Monopolies: Organized Crime
 (*Frank Bovenkerk*, NL)
- 14.35 Violence in Contemporary Chinese fiction (*Mark
 Elvin*, Australia)
- Tea
 15:30 Football Hooliganism as A World Problem (*Eric
 Dunning*, UK)
- 16.05 Stylized Violence: Martial Arts in Contemporary
 Society (*Johan Heilbron*, NL)
- Break
 16.50 Forum with invited speakers

Thematic Groups

Thematic groups will be organised around three broad themes:

Violence in World History
 Session co-ordinator: *Fred Spier*

Violence in Everyday Life
 Session co-ordinators: *Eric Dunning* (hooliganism), *Johan Heilbron/Maarten van Bottenburg* (martial arts and other sports), *Pieter Spiereburg* (interpersonal violence: long-term perspectives)

The Sociology of Norbert Elias
 session co-ordinators: *Ann Buckley* (medieval studies), *Paul Nixon* (process sociology and the performing arts)

Further details from: *Judith van Rooyen*, SISWO, Plantage Muidergracht 4, 1018 TV Amsterdam, The Netherlands. Fax: +31-20-622 9430. E-mail: rooyen@siswo.uva.nl

CONTRIBUTIONS

The next issue of *Figurations* will be mailed in May 1997. News and notes should be sent to the Editor, *Stephen Mennell*, in Dublin, by 1 April, 1997.

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

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Figurations is printed and mailed by SISWO: The Netherlands Universities Institute for Co-ordination of Research in the Social Sciences.

Graphic Design and Desktop Publishing: *Peter de Kroon* (SISWO).

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