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ARTICLE

Space, time and the constitution of subjectivity: comparing Elias and Foucault[1]

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Abstract: The work of Foucault and Elias has been compared before in the social sciences and humanities, but here I argue that the main distinction between their approaches to the construction of subjectivity is the relative importance of space and time in their accounts. This is not just a matter of the "history of ideas," as providing for the temporal dimension more fully in theories of subjectivity and the habitus allows for a greater understanding of how ways of being, acting and feeling in different spaces are related but largely unintended. Here I argue that discursive practices, governmental operations and technologies of the self (explanatory claims of both Foucault and the Foucauldian tradition) take shape as processes within the continuities of the figurational flow connecting people across space and time. Continuity should not be understood as stability or sameness over time, but as the contingent relations between successive social formations. As Elias argues, there is a structure or order to long-term social change, albeit unplanned, and this ultimately provides the broader social explanation for the historicity of the subject. Though discursive practices happen in particular spaces, we must recognise these spaces, and the practices therein, as socially constructed over time in response to largely unplanned moral and cultural developments.

Keywords: Foucault, Elias, subjectivity, space, time.

Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to examine how both Foucault and Elias use the concepts of space and time in their explanations of subjectivity or habitus forma-tion, with a view to offering a critical comparison as well as stressing the primacy of the temporal dimension for the development of subjectivity. Elias's concern for tem-porality compared with Foucault's emphasis on spatiality is noted by Ogborn in his comparison of their interpretation of *Las Meninas* by Diego Velázquez in terms of subjectivity.[2] Here I attempt to elaborate more broadly on the implications of this space-time distinction for the construction of subjectivity or habitus. I also argue, *pace* Ogborn,[3] that based on this distinction it is possible to choose between Foucault and Elias on the question of how the subject is formed. Historians such

[1] The focus here is primarily on Foucault's account of subjectivity in *Discipline and Punish* and, to a lesser extent, *The History of Sexuality*. This allows closer comparison to Elias's historical socio-logy of subjectivity or habitus.

[2] M. Ogborn, "Knowing the Individual: Michel Foucault and Norbert Elias on *Las Meninas* and the Modern Subject," in Steve Pile and Nigel Thrift (ed.), *Mapping the Subject: Geographies of Cultural Transformation* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), 70.

[3] Ibid., 74.

as Hughes-Warrington also note that the spatial metaphors and symbols in Foucault's writing are not simply "rhetorical flourishes."[4] However, the temporal dimension cannot be posited as independently primary, simply because all social processes and practices take place in specific spaces or sites. For Foucault, the practices in those spaces are instrumental in the fabrication of particular subjectivities, so his vision of how the subject emerges is highly spatialized. For Elias, the actual social spaces are less sig-nificant than the emotional experience of contradiction between a prior habitus (or embodied social learning, a second nature) and the emerging social pressures to conduct oneself differently. This contradiction occurs over time, over the life course of each individual, but the social pressure to act in new ways, with a different and more nuanced outlook, takes shape in new prescriptions and cultural guidelines that often require several generations to develop. Furthermore, this individual expe-rience of discontinuity (between how one formerly conducted oneself and one's new expectations) emerges within the processual flow of changing social interdependen-cies that exhibit a continuity with older social formations.

Though Foucault's analysis went beyond the spatial, his insistence on rupture, discontinuity, and surveillance has encouraged a spatialized conception of subject-tivity at the expense of a temporal one. I argue that different forms of subjectivity are deeply interconnected, and consequently that Foucauldian analysis has taken the principle of spatial and temporal dispersion too far. Ultimately, time is given pri-macy over space because spaces occur through time; in other words, people con-struct the various sites of surveillance, instruction and reflection according to deve-loping social functions (the social need to teach, punish, or contain people, and indeed the space to encourage or incite them to work, confess, relax, and also expe-rience excitement). These functions, though, are partly planned and partly inchoate attempts to manage responses to unplanned changes in the structure of social relationships (over space and time) brought on by competition and co-operation.

The reason to compare Elias and Foucault is simply that both sought to explain the constitution of subjectivity. It could be argued of course that both did so in different ways and therefore defy direct comparison. But by relating their respective explana-tions, the value and limitations of each come into sharper relief, and social scientists (and indeed for those advocating a more public sociology, people beyond any academic specialisation) continue to try to explain how we come to see ourselves as we do, and how we place limits and capacities on ourselves and others. Elias and Foucault asked similar questions in relation to the subject. Elias's work is a sustai-ned deconstruction and critique of *homo clausus* that he claims permeates the social sciences, as well as an attempt to conceive of subjectivity (though Elias prefers the older concept of habitus) in terms of *homines aperti*.[5]

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[4] Marnie Hughes-Warrington, "The 'Ins' and 'Outs' of History: Revision as Non- Place." *History and Theory*, 46, 4 (2007): 71.

[5] Norbert Elias, *What Is Sociology?* (London: Hutchinson, 1978).

Foucault's objects of inquiry, varied and substantively similar to Elias's, also concern "the different modes by which, in our culture, human beings are made subjects."[6] The fact that Foucault stresses discontinuities and challenges the notion of long-term historical developments (which in Elias's sense are more fruitfully seen as social processes over many generations) should in no way insulate him from critical analysis and comparison.[7] To Foucault's credit of course, he welcomed critical responses to his work.[8] Though elaborated in the discussion below it is important at this point to state clearly that the Foucault-Elias comparison should not be viewed merely as a matter of exegetical interest. The time-space differentiation concerning subjectivity produces different explanations that can be assessed. Admittedly this differentiation has to be seen in terms of the balance of emphasis between spatial and temporal dimensions (and, obviously, recognising that movement through space takes time). But the prioritiza-tion of spatial metaphors tends to narrow the timeframe of habitus or subject formation; each individual is incited through the deployment of expert discourses and practices to become a type of person, to recognise themselves as desiring or producing individuals according to the discursive practices implemented in specific, often closed or delineated, spaces. There are theoretically as many subjectivities or ways of being as there are discursive practices organised within particular institu-tional sites.

For Elias, the formation of habitus takes considerable time and occurs across multi-ple spaces. But the spaces themselves are less significant than the constellation (or figuration to use Elias's term) of many interdependent people through which each person's habitus, from early infancy, takes shape. As the social network to which the person belongs becomes more differentiated over time, new pressures in the form of standards of conduct or social expectations develop which often collide with former codes of conduct and actual behaviour. Gradual change enables the develop-ment of more stable, but unplanned (because the network changes are largely un-planned) forms of habitus, though contradictory feelings, constraints and compul-sions are normal. More rapid change can produce resistance and a fossilisation of habitus as the sense of one's identity feels threatened by "external" groups or by increasing pressures towards social integration in the form of nation-states or supranational groups.[9] This emotional sense of conflicting identities can be expe-rienced in schools, factories, offices, churches and sports stadia to name but a few, though the experience will be different depending on each person's position and trajectory within the dynamic, multi-tiered social network or figuration (this

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[6] Michel Foucault, "The Subject and Power," in Hubert L. Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow (ed.), *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics* (Brighton, Sussex: Harvester Press, 1982), 208.

[7] See Richard Kilminster, The Sociological Revolution: From the Enlightenment to the Global Age (London: Routledge, 1998), 85.

[8] Michel Foucault, "The History of Sexuality" in Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977*. Edited by Colin Gordon (Harlow, Essex: The Harvester Press, 1980), 193.

[9] Norbert Elias, *The Society of Individuals* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1991), 212-214.

conve-niently provides an example of the inescapable use of both spatial and temporal metaphors, but the question of emphasis is crucial for the development of different understandings of the subject). These contradictions and conflicts depend more on temporal than spatial disruptions, but such disruptions are not discontinuous as there is a structure or order to the unplanned figurational changes – there is continuity. In the next section, I briefly address previous comparisons of Elias and Foucault before highlighting in greater detail the similarities and contrasts between them in terms of relative time-space orientations towards the development of habi-tus or subjectivity.

Figurational and Foucauldian evaluations

Of course others writing from a figurational perspective have already compared Foucault and Elias,[10] and here there is a range between those suggesting compati-bility such as Smith and, to a lesser extent, Van Krieken, and those emphasising contrast such as Burkitt, Kilminster and Newton. Newton's comparison and asso-ciated critique is more aimed at Foucauldians than Foucault himself. However, he rightly notes "that continuity and discontinuity do not present mutually exclusive choices for historical analysis, and that we do not have to choose between a Foucauldian sense of 'rupture' and a traditional historical interest in continuity across time."[11] For Spierenburg, their main similarity centres on the analysis of his-torical change and the resulting contrast with present society. However, he notes that Foucault neglects long-term gradual development in favour of highlighting abrupt change. Spierenburg though is less concerned with subjectivity than with understanding broad civilizing processes through an examination of penal practices over time. Like Burkitt and Van Krieken, he finds similarities in Foucault's and Elias's depiction of power as an omnipresent feature of society, though Spierenburg argues that Foucault tends to personify power.[12]

Burkitt notes that while Elias connects changing images of the self to "dynamic networks of

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[10] Ian Burkitt, *Social Selves: Theories of the Social Formation of Personality* (London: Sage, 1991); Ian Burkitt, "Overcoming Metaphysics: Elias and Foucault on Power and Freedom," *Philosophy of the Social Sciences,* 23, 1 (1993); Ian Burkitt, "The Shifting Concept of the Self," *History of the Human Sciences,* 7, 2 (1994); Kiliminister; T. Newton, "Resocialising the Subject? A Re-Reading of Grey's 'Career as a Project of the Self....'" *Sociology,* 30, 1 (1996); T. Newton "Power, Subjectivity and British Indus-trial and Organizational Sociology: The Relevance of the Work of Norbert Elias," *Sociology,* 33, 2 (1999); T. Newton, "From Freemasons to the Employee: Organization, History and Subjectivity," *Organization Studies,* 25, 8 (2004); D. Smith, "The Civilizing Process and the History of Sexuality: Comparing Norbert Elias and Michel Foucault," *Theory and Society,* 28, 1 (1999); Pieter Spienenburg, "Punishment, Power, and History: Foucault and Elias," *Social Science History,* 28, 4 (2004); Robert Van Krieken, "Proto-Governmentalization and the Historical Formation of Organizational Subjectivity," *Economy and Society,* 25, 2 (1996); and Robert Van Krieken, *Norbert Elias* (London: Routledge, 1998).

[11] Newton, "From Freemasons to the Employee: Organization, History and Subjectivity," 1365.

[12] See also Burkitt, "Overcoming Metaphysics: Elias and Foucault on Power and Freedom" on this point.

social relations," Foucault sees such changes as "linked to dis-courses."[13] The texts of the Enlightenment did not produce feelings and practices of individuality, but reflected broader social changes.[14] However, in a later paper Bur-kitt agrees with Averill's criticism of Elias to the effect that he neglects the produc-tive capacity of regulations to orient emotional conduct.[15] Burkitt favourably cites Foucault's *History of Sexuality* as an example of how prescriptive texts in Antiquity were used to produce feelings of friendship and love. The question remains, how-ever, to what extent do such texts reflect changes in social interdependencies and related shifts in power ratios or, alternatively, produce emotions *ab initio*? Certainly such texts find receptive audiences who engage their imaginations through the scenes of novels (a development examined by Elias[16] in terms of romantic love in court societies, to which Burkitt refers), but it is difficult to conceive of expert discourses inciting romantic love or sexual longing as opposed to providing guidelines for conduct.[17]

In an early comparison of the two theorists, Van Krieken recognises their conver-gence on the substantive topic of the historicity of subjectivity, but contrasts Fou-cault's rejection of the repressive hypothesis in relation to sexuality with Elias's focus on the growing superego in the transition to adulthood.[18] For Elias, the con-cept of time is central to both social development (in a non-teleological sense) and self-development (in a non-normative sense). Though not in the context of a compa-rison with Foucault, Van Krieken highlights the significance of temporality in Elias's conception of habitus formation through childhood.[19] This is the sense in which social standards are internalised by children over time, and, for example, the dura-tion of schooling increases to account for rising expectations of self-control and foresight beyond the specific content of instruction.

Smith offers a more direct comparison between *The Civilizing Process* and *The History of Sexuality*, and sees greater convergence than the other authors discussed above.[20] Smith maintains that both "argue that the degree of centralization and the complexi-ty of networks of interdependence increased greatly over time."[21] To support this, Smith asserts that, like Elias, Foucault ties forms of sexual austerity to "a cluster of concrete relationships."[22] If we examine this quote in greater detail though, we see that Foucault understands such "concrete relationships" to mean

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[13] Burkitt, "The Shifting Concept of the Self," 16.
[14] Ibid., 17-18.
[15] Ian Burkitt, "Social Relationships and Emotions," *Sociology*, 31,1 (1997): 49-50.
[16] Norbert Elias, *The Court Society* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1983).
[17] Cas Wouters, *Sex and Manners: Female Emancipation in the West, 1890-2000* (London: Sage, 2004).
[18] Van Krieken, "The Organization of the Soul: Elias and Foucault on Discipline and the Self."
[19] Van Krieken, *Norbert Elias*, 153-154.
[20] D. Smith, "*The Civilizing Process* and *the History of Sexuality*: Comparing Norbert Elias and Michel Foucault," *Theory and Society*, 28, 1 (1999).
[21] Ibid., 85.
[22] Foucault cited in Smith, 84.

> relations to the body, with the question of health, …the relation to the other sex, with the question of the spouse as privileged partner, …the relation to one's own sex, …and finally, the relation to truth, where the question is raised of the spiritual conditions that enable one to gain access to wisdom.[23]

Without diminishing the significance of these relations, these are not equivalent to the mobile social tissue of mutual and varied dependencies with many other people of diverse social functions characterised by Elias's concept of figuration. Admitted-ly, there are affinities in various passages of *The Care of the Self*[24] that Smith identifies, but these do not amount to figurational explanations because the long-term, imam-nent dynamics of the structural aspects of society, or the structure of social change, are not addressed. Foucault does make the connection between the changing ways in which the ethical subject must relate to new conditions of reciprocity and greater equality between men and women, but the emphasis is on the former rather than the latter. The experience of pleasure is seen as changing in the course of its problema-tization by the ethical subject, but the kinds of social pressures leading to conceptual and affective innovations, which inform Elias's approach, are marginalised:

> A growth of public constraints and prohibitions? An individualistic withdrawal accompanying the valorization of private life? We need instead to think in terms of a crisis of the subject, or rather a crisis of subjectivation – that is, in terms of a difficulty in the manner in which the individual could form himself as the ethical subject of his actions, and efforts to find in devotion to self that which could enable him to submit to rules and give a purpose to his existence.[25]

The abovementioned comparisons are clearly important, but rather than see the convergences and differences mainly in terms of power, the subject or techniques of the self, I argue that we can more fully reveal the nature of subjectivity by exploring its temporal dimension, particularly the emotional experience of discontinuities through figurational continuities. While Foucault eschewed the notion of historical continuity for fear of resurrecting human consciousness as the original subject, I contend that by following Elias's understanding of continuity we avoid this eventuality precisely because of the unplanned, though structured, nature of figurational developments. Before elaborating on this point, I want to briefly ad-dress Foucauldian evaluations of the Foucault-Elias comparison. Rose[26]

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[23] Michel Foucault, *The Use of Pleasure, the History of Sexuality: Vol. 2.* (London: Penguin, 1992), 23.
[24] Michel Foucault, *The Care of the Self, the History of Sexuality: Vol. 3*. (London: Penguin, 1990), 92-95.

[25] Ibid., 95.
[26] Nikolas Rose, "Authority and the Genealogy of Subjectivity," in Paul Heelas, Scott Lash and Paul Morris (ed.), *Detraditionalization: Critical Reflections on Authority and Identity* (Oxford: Black-well Publishers, 1996); and Nikolas Rose, "Identity, Genealogy, History," in Stuart Hall and Paul Du Gay (ed.), *Questions of Cultural Identity* (London: Sage, 1996).

has been very clear in marking the contrast between Elias and Foucault in favour of the latter theorist.

Rose's interpretation of Foucault is highly instructive for the key distinction which pertains between Elias and Foucault in terms of time and space:

> Perhaps, rather than narrativizing the ways of being human, we need to spatialize being. Such a spatialization would render being intelligible in terms of the localization of repertoires of habits, routines and images of self-understanding and self-cultivation within specific domains of thought, action and value – libraries and studies, bedrooms and bathhouses, markets and department stores, living rooms and coffee houses.[27]

Subjectivity is seen here as constructed through specific techniques connected to spe-cific discourses and knowledges and implemented in specific places. Each has its own history and so attempts to connect across spaces are considered by Rose to conflate separate domains of activity. For Elias,[28] people who act as politicians, for example, are at other times businesspeople and sportspeople; in order to understand the functions of specific fields, we must see the relations between fields, and examine the total fluid network of people (in terms of their relationships and interdependences). Similarly, Elias and Dunning[29] explain how organised and standardised sports emerged in the latter half of the nineteenth century in England as exciting activities in the context of increasing routinisation of many aspects of social life. Specific sites and spaces were constructed and adapted by people over time to facilitate the "controlled decontrolling" of emotional constraints. So the desire for leisure spaces is linked to diminishing or pacifying social conflict in other aspects of life. This is a relative movement of course, as conflict remains in all social relations and these leisure spaces, such as sports stadia, are constantly in process them-selves as general social standards of acceptable aggression change. The social needs for and experiences of these spaces are explained in terms of the figurational flow of greater state pacification, industrialization and urbanization over preceding centuries.

The notion that space and time can be separated is obviously absurd. Social prac-tices occur over time in specific places. People spend Saturday afternoons shopping in malls or watching sports games. They work in buildings and various other spaces throughout the day. Space and time are inseparable in terms of human activity. But Foucault placed far greater emphasis on real spaces and spatial metaphors in the construction of subjectivity. For Elias, subjectivity, or to use his preferred term, habi-tus, develops gradually through

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[27] Rose, "Authority and the Genealogy of Subjectivity," 304.

[28] Norbert Elias, "Introduction," in Eric Dunning and Norbert Elias (ed.), *Quest for Excitement: Sport and Leisure in the Civilizing Process*. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986), 35.

[29] Norbert Elias and Eric Dunning, *Quest for Excitement: Sport and Leisure in the Civilizing Process* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986).

the experiences of individuals in relations with many other people over the course of their lives. However, the ideas and values con-cerning how one should conduct oneself, also a prominent theme for Foucault, are analyzed and synthesized by Elias as particular processes within a broader set of social processes concerning functional specialization (especially the growing divi-sion of labour), social differentiation and lengthening chains of interdependence. Not only does Elias compare different time periods, he also connects the changes between them; in other words, he identifies the temporal structure of social change and the continuities underlying differences across time.

While Foucault certainly differentiates between time periods, without structural explanations for the transformation of one social formation to the other, the com-parison across time is remarkably similar to comparing across space. In the following sections I will attempt to highlight the significant differences between Elias and Foucault concerning habitus or subjectivity before claiming that Foucault's relative marginalisation of temporal continuity is based on his misplaced assumption that such continuity must be based on the original subject of human consciousness.

Social control and self-identity

The notion of being controlled by other people in the course of which one begins to exert control over oneself is a theme common to both Elias and Foucault. As with the following other themes, I will first discuss each theorist's treatment in turn before highlighting key contrasts and convergences. The concepts of time and space will be addressed through these themes instead of a separate analysis. Perhaps Foucault's fullest exposition on social control came in *Discipline and Punish*.[30] Here, Foucault opens with the public spectacle of a man condemned to torture and execu-tion as a display of the king's sovereign power. Foucault traces changes in disciple-nary and punitive practices over the following century that includes the diminished use of physical force on the individual body (and the practice of inflicting severe pain), and the emergence of disciplinary mechanisms and techniques that act on bodies in more confined and sequestered spaces – prisons. Clearly these techniques have a temporal dimension in that they are implemented over short time periods (in the case of long prison sentences, it is still the recurring frequency of surveillance techniques that are at issue rather than a gradual unfolding of a long-term process), but the theoretical significance for the construction of subjectivity is visual exami-nation within confined spaces. Foucault places particular emphasis on the time peri-od between 1760 and 1840, during which "The body as the major target of penal repression disappeared."[31] The spectacle of suffering no longer functioned as a war-ning to those contemplating legal transgressions; instead, the certainty of punitive consequences took its place. Rather than the executioner acting on the body of the criminal, a completely new set of functional specialists (prison warders, doctors, psychiatrists) came to address the soul and psyche of the individual prisoner. These new functionaries also brought a growing

[30] Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Vintage Books, 1995).
[31] Ibid., 8.

sense of shame to punishing.

This account has parallels with that of Elias in his analysis of the gradual advance in thresholds of repugnance and shame since the late middle ages, though there is no zero point or starting date to these civilizing processes.[32] As the social standards regarding bodily comportment and control became more onerous and exacting, practices and conduct previously considered acceptable or unremarkable had increasingly to be hidden "behind the scenes" of social life, if not altogether banished. There is even some convergence in the methodological use of etiquette, training and conduct manuals to examine people's expectations of each other. But these manuals are interpreted differently, according to the relative status of time and space in their accounts. Foucault treats the manuals as sets of instructions that produce bodily practices for each recipient of such instruction. Ultimately, this con-stellation of recurrent bodily movements and routines in constrained and observable *spaces* produce a mode of self-reflection and self-relation. In other words, a quite direct generation of subjectivities emerges.

In Elias's case, what disappears *over time* from sets of instructions and pedagogical treatises is at least as significant as new rules and techniques. He interprets the disappearance of rules as the effective internalization of social standards. Elias examines the instructions and advice on particular topics of etiquette (for example, spitting, eating, and other bodily functions) in successive editions of manuals over centuries to discover when such advice has been removed, and also when rules have become more precise and elaborate. The fact that so many rules recur with little change during the late medieval period indicates that the upper classes of this time had not accepted such principles of socially prescribed conduct to the extent that they could adhere to them without direct observation by others. The level of self-restraint and self-steering mechanisms were uneven and unstable. However, this does not mean that Elias followed a simple repressive hypothesis entailing the social control of natural instincts. Many less civilized practices were generated and su-stainned by specific, recurring social conflicts and relations that encouraged more impulsive conduct. So the spaces of social conflict in relation to battles over terri-torial control produce a way of acting, thinking and feeling among the warrior nobility that shapes the social relations and practices in other spaces, including spaces that we would consider more "privatized" now, such as dining rooms and bedrooms. The changing meaning and function of spaces, the very differentiation of *space*, occurs gradually over generations (*time*) as the imagined division between public and private ("I" and "we") advances.

Foucault's account of the relation between social constraint and subjectivity is quite direct

[32]Norbert Elias, *The Civilizing Process: Sociogenetic and Psychogenetic Investigations*. Revised Edition (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2000).

and technical. Clearly, Foucault was concerned with the implementation of objecttifying and subjectifying procedures in time and space, but here the space is highly controlled in relatively closed institutions such as prisons, schools and fac-tories. The temporal dimension is significant insofar as prescribed activities are afforded particular durations for ideal performance and fulfillment. People are in-dividualized and subjectified partly by virtue of occupying individual spaces, which permits closer social observation and control. The organization and differentiation of space allowed for more precise timing of school periods and apprenticeships; here "time" refers to strategic use of time as resource to achieve certain aims. Similarly, though Foucault also discusses historical events and political transformations, he tends to treat history as a discourse available as a tactic in power relations.[33]

Elias, on the other hand, sees time mainly as an indicator of changes in social interdependencies. Because of his emphasis on social processes, the notion of time is indispensable to his analysis and synthesis, but he pays far less attention than Foucault to the deliberate organization of time to meet objectives. Elias of course did explain the invention and development of timing devices, from calendars to clocks, as human attempts at coordinating the interlocking of social functions (and therefore people) brought about by largely unplanned processes such as urbanization and commercialization.[34] Foucault's analysis of the timetable is perhaps an example of these timing devices, but he is less concerned with the long-term social generation of the need for such devices than with the effects of such devices once diffused through schools, factories and hospitals. The timetable allowed "another degree of precision in the breakdown of gestures and movements, another way of adjusting the body to temporal imperatives."[35] The timetable encouraged individuals to be more produc-tive in their use of time. The principle of panopticism would enable surveillance at all times, as people would be always aware that they may be under observation, but never certain that they actually are being observed. Through this spatial organi-zation, they assume the role of self-surveillance to, ironically, avoid the potential punishments following observation of transgressions and hence apprehension.[36]

In a way one could imagine Elias's[37] depiction of court society as a type of panoptical space, except, of course, that the members of the court were aware they were being observed by others. But Elias explains this spatial development as an outcome of long-term social

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[33] Michel Foucault, *"Society Must Be Defended": Lectures at the Collège de France, 1975–1976* (New York: Picador, 2003), 189-212.
[34] Norbert Elias, *Time: An Essay* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1993).
[35] Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, 151.
[36] Ibid., 202-203.
[37] Elias, *The Court Society*; Elias, *The Civilizing Process: Sociogenetic and Psychogenetic Investigations*.

changes over time, and it is the experience of disjunction over time as existing practices become unacceptable in new social contexts that unintentio-nally produces forms of subjectivity or habitus. Territories became largely pacified through the survival contests between competing nobles trying to maintain their social meaning and identity. With the effective monopoly of the means of violence by the winning noble house (which eventually became transformed into the state), provincial warrior nobles had little choice but to become courtiers in the service of the king at court. Such nobles had to constrain their former impulsive conduct un-der strict etiquette rules that served the king's status maintenance. The theoretically significant point here is that the development of a type of controlled habitus (in-creasingly imagined as detached from others) is based on the temporal experience of living through a process of increasing social interdependencies and expectations, which necessarily involves emotional contradictions between how one used to be-have and how one is now expected to conduct oneself.

It is crucial to note that Elias is not proposing that the lengthening chains of interdependence between more and more people over time did not create *ab initio* the self-controlled person. There is "no point at which human beings are uncivilized and as it were begin to be civilized."[38] People's capacity for self-control through the development of their consciences become more even and stable with increasing, dif-ferentiating and intensifying social interdependencies and complexities. People at an earlier stage of social development (this should not be confused with some linear, teleological account, which Elias rejected) were capable of severe self-restraint on occasions for specific purposes, but this oscillated with conduct relatively free of social control, or indeed more impulsive conduct through open conflict and enmity. These forms of conduct were generally recognised as part of the particular social context or set of social relationships. The division between self and others was less pronounced and so people were less inclined to "hold back" their socially shaped emotions. Through increasing social complexity, people come to depend on more people for the fulfillment of more needs and desires, but these needs (themselves often socially generated) must be postponed, modified or abandoned in order to meet the needs of others. A more recurring and inescapable tension develops be-tween what one wants and what one needs to do in various social contexts. It is this more consistent tension that produces the feeling of an inner emotional core or identity, which further produces feelings of detachment from both people and objects. The crux of the civilizing process is that people became more self-steering and self-restrained through lengthening and differentiating interdependent links between more and more people. This is obviously a long-term process that takes time, but social interdependencies can also shorten and simplify over time.

It is not my contention here that Foucault never addresses the question of time, but that he prioritizes space rather than connections over several generations. Of course his discussion

[38] Elias, *Time: An Essay*, 146.

of the explosion of discourse around sexuality, combined with silence concerning certain social relationships such as parents and children or teachers and students, implies change over time and therefore echoes Elias. Foucault's interpret-tation of a former licentiousness in relation to sexuality and the body is also similar:

> At the beginning of the seventeenth century a certain frankness was still common, it would seem. Sexual practices had little need of secrecy; words were said without undue reticence, and things were done without too much concealment; one had a tolerant familiarity with the illicit. Codes regulating the coarse, the obscene, and the indecent were quite lax compared to those of the nineteenth century.[39]

But Foucault's explanations for this change over time are not given in terms of time; in other words, Foucault does not really account for the links between successive social formations that might connect to the rising fears and anxieties surrounding sexuality. I qualify this interpretation slightly because Foucault does of course dis-cuss the problem of population as an emergent political problem from the begin-ning of the eighteenth century. The problem concerned "manpower' and 'wealth"[40] and the need for productive labour; hence, new techniques of statistics such as birth rates and marriage rates developed. Foucault's mode of analysis is more centred on the relations between the discourses of population and the discourses of sexual conduct, than with the relation between social developments and emerging prescriptions and proscriptions. Once again, he reads a very direct connection into what political administrators and reformers wrote and what then transpired through normalizing practices. This logic inevitably leads to the presumption of intentions, plans and strategies, even if such objectives are deemed subjectless. In the next sec-tion, I examine the crucial issue of continuity over time, perhaps the clearest dis-tinction between Elias and Foucault, though largely attributable to their different interpretations of this term.[41]

Social interdependencies, history and temporal continuity

It has become almost commonplace to characterize Foucault's work as merely discursive or lacking in relation to reality. Burkitt, for example, argues that Foucault "sees the social construction of the individual as occurring entirely within discourse,"[42] and that "there is the idea in Foucault that discourse creates the real within its own domain and there is no real, practical world outside it."[43] Similarly, Pickering warns, primarily in relation to Foucault, that

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[39] Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction*: *Vol. 1*. (New York: Vintage Books, 1990), 3.
[40] Ibid., 25.
[41] See also Ogborn, 69, on this point.
[42] Burkitt, *Social Selves: Theories of the Social Formation of Personality*, 96.
[43] Ibid., 100.

> unless we wish to jettison any sense that it is *their* experience ["of ordinary men and women"] which is primarily in the frame, then we have to work with some epistemological claim to referentiality. It is on these grounds that history needs to be rescued from the enormous condescension of poststructuralism.[44]

One could cite many examples of critiques such as these. But a close reading of Fou-cault's later work, from *Discipline and Punish* onwards, suggests that this commen-tary is unfair. Foucault does sometimes locate discursive practices in terms of broader social changes and actual events. Indeed he argues that "there is nothing to be gained from describing this autonomous layer of discourses unless one can relate it to other layers, practices, institutions, social relations, political relations, and so on."[45] But, to use a spatial metaphor, the distance between the discourse and the institutions and social relations identified by Foucault tend to be short; he cites an example concerning the above quote in terms of the relation between the "episte-mological domain of medicine" and hospitalization.[46]

With regard to referentiality, however, it is clear that Foucault does not doubt the opening torture and execution scene of *Discipline and Punish*. He does not question the reality of prison architecture that really aimed at monitoring prisoners. So once again there are some similarities with Elias, but here the difference is in the centrality and explanatory status of broad social changes for Elias compared to the almost incidental and background treatment of social processes by Foucault. By social processes I am referring to well-worn sociological concepts such as urbani-zation, industrialization, migration, commercialization and democratization. Fou-cauldians, of course, can easily cite page numbers where these or similar words are mentioned, but we need to compare this to what was originally the second volume (part two in the revised edition) of *The Civilizing Process*. It is here that Elias and Foucault really part ways, and it is here that their treatment of time diverges consi-derably.

Elias traces the changing structure of society over centuries. Consequently, the ad-vancing threshold of shame, the increasing emphasis on self-control and the gro-wing feeling of separation from others are all connected to this unplanned development. People of course make plans within this unplanned, fluid social net-work, but their aims, intentions and strategies are already shaped by the prevailing beliefs, attitudes and culture together with their understanding of the relevant social contexts. The construction of subjectivity and identity is much more indirect for Elias as he links the emotional experiences of people, their social relations and interdependencies (not just the specific relation between teacher

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[44] Michael Pickering, *History, Experience and Cultural Studies* (Hampshire and London: Macmillan Press, 1997), 244 (original emphasis).

[45] Michel Foucault, "On the Ways of Writing History," in Michel Foucault, *Aesthetics, Method, and Epistemology: Essential Works of Foucault, 1954-1984. Vol. 2*. Edited by J.D. Faubion (London: Pen-guin Books, 2000), 284.

[46] Ibid., 285.

and pupil, warden and prisoner, psychotherapist and patient) and the shifting power relations between conflicting and competing classes and other groups. As classes become more inter-dependent with the commercialization and monetization of society, as well as pro-cesses of industrialization and urbanization which also mean increasing social interdependencies, the power ratio becomes less unequal. Within figurations of widening social distance between classes and a fairly rigid hierarchy, the very uneven power balance means different codes of conduct depending on the specific relation. It was taboo for lower class people to act impulsively in front of their social superiors. However, the rules of conduct were quite different in relations from the perspective of the higher classes. They could engage in conduct in front of their servants or other lower ranked people with much less concern about causing offence. Though courtiers had become accustomed to varying their conduct and emotional displays according to the specific social encounter and their current judgement of the shifting hierarchy at court, the growing equalization between classes meant that individuals had to constrain or mould their conduct almost irrespective of the class position of the people they encountered. The emotions and feelings that had been associated with social relationships lost their social compass, yet were still experienced as a legacy of a habitus formed under different social conditions, and also because emotions have a biological dimension. Since people were under increasing pressure to restrain and adjust their emotional conduct no matter the class composition of other people in their company, they began to imagine the locus of emotional experience as emanating from within themselves.

This new emotional experience reinforced the already developing individualization processes set in train by social and self-observation and by virtue of processes of functional specialisation and social differentiation. These social and psychic con-ditions started to prevail throughout society as interdependencies grew between classes and groups, though not with the same intensity across the class spectrum. Through a growing sense of self-detachment, increasing options resulting from functional democratization, and increasing anxieties surrounding status, proper conduct, self-fulfillment and careerism, it is not surprising that some people developed new insights or knowledge about how to cope and prosper in changed circumstances. Eventually such knowledge became crystallized in techniques, skills and even occupations, thereby adding to the social complexity and interdepen-dencies in society. But in this Eliasian analysis the felt need for psychological coun-seling or therapy develops before and then in tandem with the growth of new specialists, some of whom no doubt exploit insecurities and anxieties. It is quite another matter though to position these new social functions as creating through their discursive practices the way individuals come to recognise and work on them-selves as ethical subjects. Again it is important to note that these practices can in-deed have effects, but the need for such interventions is generated by broader, unplanned social processes, in which the feelings of individuality, uniqueness and insularity are also not the result of expert discourses and discursive practices. The significance of temporality here is not the

imposition of temporal controls through timetables and performance measures, but the contradictions experienced by people as figurations, the network of interdependent people, develop *over time*, become more interdependent and complex or alternatively less interconnected.

So the prioritization of space or time is not simply a matter of research interest on the part of theorists, providing different but equally tenable explanations for emerging subjectivities. Time is crucial, both for the individual across his or her life course, and for the largely unplanned figuration of which he or she is a part. Though different spaces may be deliberately constructed to allow for different social (and self) experiences (churches, sports stadia, cinemas, theatres, houses), their functions are interdependent because there is a structured, narrative coherency to the habitus rather than a fragmented dispersion across space. This does not mean that subjectivity is devoid of contradictions; people experience contradictions through changes in sets of social interdependencies over time. Former enemies be-come allies, friendships dissolve, nations or communities lose some of their func-tions to higher levels of social organization, and families become havens of emotional succour as their former functions of labour recede. These are unplanned processes that shape the experience of identity and subjectivity in particular con-texts, but these contexts can be temporally linked as well as spatialized. The direc-tion, structure and pace of social change produce contradictions, anxieties and uncertainties in status, expectations and conduct.

Foucault is much more circumspect about the uses of history in his work. He has of course been a huge influence on the discipline of history, but he tends to sharply divide historians.[47] Munslow supports Foucault's historiographical innovations, particularly the principle that "Foucauldian history does not evolve diachronically, but is best understood synchronically, as an explosive discursive structure."[48] Though Burke argues that Foucault fails to "discuss the mechanics of change,"[49] he recognises the value in Foucault's approach for undermining the notion of historical progress. Foucault is particularly sceptical about the notion of continuity between successive phases in history. Indeed, he questions the very idea of conventional chronology in traditional historical discourse.[50] He seems to consign classical approaches to history to the past, perhaps leading him to prioritize space: "As we know, the great obsession of the nineteenth century was history: …The present age

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[47] G.S. Jones, "The Determinist Fix: Some Obstacles to the Further Development of the Linguistic Approach to History in the 1990s," *History Workshop Journal,* 42 (1996): 21-22; Allan Megill, "Foucault, Structuralism, and the Ends of History," *The Journal Modern History,* 51, 3 (1979); and Alun Munslow, *Deconstructing History*. Second Edition. (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), 129.

[48] Munslow, 141.

[49] Peter Burke, *History and Social Theory* (Cambridge: Polity, 1992), 151.

[50] Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (London: Routledge, 1972).

may be the age of space instead."[51] Foucault does recognise that space has a history and that space and time are intertwined.[52] But the question of historical continuity is either evaded or more typically attacked. Though he notes that discourses do not float free from history, he emphasises the need to consider their "isomorphisms."[53] He advocates "serial history," which does not accept *a priori* truisms of feudalism and industrial development, but rather the archive of available documents themselves.[54] Once these conventional objects of historiography are critically ad-dressed (and dismissed if the documents dictate such), "History appears then not as a great continuity underneath an apparent discontinuity, but as a tangle of super-imposed discontinuities."[55] So here history is spatialized as different levels and types of processes and practices potentially co-existing. Elias would not doubt that multiple processes and practices, such as inflation and agricultural practices, occur simultaneously. But this does not negate the continuity of successive, and differ-rently structured, social formations. Foucault seems sometimes to conflate continui-ty with sameness, linearity or teleology, but Elias rejected these assumptions of figurational change and social development. Elias also tended to avoid concepts like capitalism and modernity precisely because of their tendency to impose a monolithic structure on societies in specific time periods.

Foucault questions historians' focus on long time periods precisely because of the presumed connotation of stability beneath the apparent discontinuities: "Beneath the rapidly changing history of governments, wars, and famines, there emerge other, apparently unmoving histories."[56] But there is no need to posit unchanging bed-rocks of change in order to demonstrate structural links between successive phases in long time periods. Elias connects this tendency to the imagined tenet in philoso-phy that identifying regularity and law-like stability in scientific discovery repre-sents the highest value.[57] However, Foucault's suspicion of anything resembling totality or unity in society leads him to doubt meanings beyond documents them-selves and to seek totalities and unities, such as they are, within the corpus of identified documents themselves.[58] This is significantly different from Elias's treat-ments, and, once again, this is of no mere exegetical interest. As discussed above, once prescriptions and proscriptions disappear from etiquette manuals,

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[51] Michel Foucault, "Different Spaces," in *Aesthetics, Method, and Epistemology: Essential Works of Foucault, 1954-1984*. *Vol. 2*. Edited by J.D. Faubion. (London: Penguin Books, 2000), 175.

[52] Ibid., 176.

[53] Michel Foucault, "'On the Ways of Writing History," in Michel Foucault, *Aesthetics, Method, and Epistemology: Essential Works of Foucault, 1954-1984*. *Vol. 2*. Edited by J.D. Faubion (London: Pen-guin Books, 2000), 285.

[54] Michel Foucault, "Return to History" In Michel Foucault, *Aesthetics, Method, and Epistemology: Essential Works of Foucault, 1954-1984*. *Vol. 2*. Edited by J.D. Faubion. (London: Penguin Books, 2000), 426-427.

[55] Ibid., 429.

[56] Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, 3.

[57] Elias, *Involvement and Detachment* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1987), 125.

[58] Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, 7.

Elias infers that such advice has become redundant and the standards have become "internalised" or, more properly, social constraints towards self-constraints (though self compulsions should also be considered) have advanced. This development is obviously time-dependent and Elias seeks these temporal changes precisely because of his incipient theorisation of the temporality of habitus. The apparent basis of Fou-cault's rejection of "total history" is that he sees in it an attempt to make "human consciousness the original subject of all historical development and all action."[59] Because he must reject supreme human agency, he must reject historical continuity, but there is a certain irony in assuming that finding order in social change is tantamount to advocating some invisible hand or intentional subject. Elias conceives of no such subject of total history, due to the largely uncontrollable, but patterned, developing chain of interdependent links between people over time and across space.

Conclusion

Elias and Foucault share many common themes and concerns: the body, the development of self-control, power relations (rather than power as an individual possession), their sense of detachment, refusal to seek origins, and indeed emerging incitements in "discourses," to use Foucault's term. But one of the main distinctions between them is the significance and prioritisation of space and time in their various explanations, and this has implications for how subjectivity or habitus is theorised. In *Discipline and Punish* Foucault stresses the importance of spatial differentiation for the surveillance, correction and normalizing of individuals. Though of course this surveillance and normalization takes time, and is a set of processes as well as prac-tices, the temporal aspect is short and recurring compared to the long-term struc-tural change that Elias reconstructs from historiographic texts that are treated as re-presentations (evidence) of past social realities. Foucault also used such texts but eschewed any notion of "continuity underneath an apparent discontinuity"; rather, he sees history "as a tangle of superimposed discontinuities."[60] Foucault states that the genealogical approach "must record the singularity of events… it must be sensitive to their recurrence, not to trace the gradual curve of their evolution, but to isolate the different scenes where they engaged in different roles."[61] Here, there is clearly a prioritization of space over time.

I argue that the space-time comparison between Foucault and Elias is of more significance than a "history of ideas." We require temporalised concepts to explain changing subjectivities. And subjectivities do change, a point acknowledged by Fou-cault and Foucauldians alike. But the latter tend to recognise space and difference (as if mapping

[59] Ibid., 12.

[60] Foucault, "Return to History", 429.

[61] Michel Foucault, "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History," in Michel Foucault, *The Foucault Reader*, Edited by Paul Rabinow (London: Penguin, 1984), 76.

forms of subjectivity) as the principle of comparison. It is a limited explanation that locates the source of subjectivities in techniques and discursive practices that have as their design and ambition the construction of such subject-tivities. No doubt some spaces are designed for surveillance, but the first space that human beings encounter through which their subjectivities and identities develop is the family home (notwithstanding the brief stay in hospital). The parent or parents do not simply restate medical or psychological discourses and target their children as objects to be made subjects accordingly. They invoke their own childhood expe-riences, current social standards of conduct and adapt them in relation to changing and anticipated social expectations and opportunities. As children grow they be-come interdependent with more and more people (some relatively voluntary, such as friendship networks, others more subject to social pressure such as teacher-pupil relationships) and so layers of capacities, dispositions and inclinations are inte-grated, often in conflict and contradiction. Indeed it is this temporal contradiction once the person is seen in movement through a series of multiplying and differen-tiated social relationships, combined with historically recent cultural values of indi-vidual sovereignty produced by growing social complexity that produces feelings of separateness and in turn particular forms of subjectivity. Of course these series of moves (which must be conceived as continuous movement rather than jumps be-tween periods of stability) could be described in spatial terms; one was there and is now here. But a theoretical account of this spatialization would have to address how the spaces themselves constitute the subject, rather than the values, codes of con-duct, and emotional displays which take time to develop and in fact remain in pro-cess (not progress).

Historical continuity is important in relation to subjectivity for another obvious rea-son; as antagonistic or highly distinct social groups gradually become more inter-dependent (incidentally groups could become less interdependent over time, or the nature of their interdependencies could shift, and this would affect their sense of self and identity), such as classes, nations, generations, or genders, the formerly distinct codes of conduct often intermingle, largely imperceptibly to the people involved, without the guidance of expert discourses. The former distance between them and the pace of their power ratio realignment affects the extent to which codes form hybrids or whether the codes of the rising groups are exaggerated as signs of triumph. In terms of national habitus Elias compares the relatively weak self-steering capacity of German people in the interwar period to the more stable conscience-formation of the English and French resulting from their different patterns of state development, in particular the relatively even and longer established state pacification and greater links between people within the national territory.[62] This produces different ways of seeing, behaving and feeling (though of course every person varies due to their position within the figuration) that cannot be explained in

[62] Norbert Elias, *The Germans: Power Struggles and the Development of Habitus in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1996). See also Cas Wouters, *Informalization: Manners and Emotions since 1890* (London: Sage, 2007) on national habitus comparisons.

terms of techniques or spatial surveillance.

It is Foucault's conflation of belief in historical continuity and belief in the original subject of history that tends to spatialise rather than temporalise his account of subjectivity, but following Elias, there is no need for such conflation. Elias does not posit any unchanging factor beneath the flow of changing conditions, nor does he see intention or design in the structured order of social change.[63]

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