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ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION

The Planned and the Unplanned: A Roundtable Discussion on the Legacies of Michel Foucault and Norbert Elias

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Introduction

When one considers the proximity of their concerns, it is perhaps surprising that the works of Norbert Elias and Michel Foucault have not been more systematically compared and discussed. However, the differentiation of disciplinary knowledge (particularly the boundary that separates philosophy from social theory), compounded by parochialisms fostered by the cult of the intellectual, have delayed this process far past its due. This conversation, which began in 2008 at a conference on the works of Elias and Foucault at the University of Hamburg, is, in this regard, an effort to make up for lost time. Fashioned from hours of discussion recorded on an afternoon at the University of Amsterdam in June 2009, (enriched and clarified by the editor and participants in several rounds of polishing and revision), the discussion that follows seeks to draw out conflicts and convergences between the trajectories of thought we know as Eliasian and Foucauldian.

The History of Interiority and the Reification of Categories

Stefanie Ernst: Perhaps a useful way to begin our conversation is with an account of a small discovery I made at the Deutsches Literaturarchiv Marbach, in Germany[1] It was a letter sent from Norbert Elias to Dieter Claessens concerning Foucault's last

[1] The Deutsches Literaturarchiv (German Archive of Literature) is a centre for the collection and exploration of German literature from the age of the Enlightenment. It houses the complete works of Norbert Elias, administered by the Norbert Elias Foundation, Amsterdam. http://www.dla-marbach.de/

minute cancelation of an appearance, at Elias's invitation, at a conference in Bielefeld. In the letter, Elias reflects on recent news that the reason for this cancellation had been Foucault's faltering health, leading to his dying a short time later. Elias wrote in his letter, "I was very disappointed that Foucault could not come. Much to my regret I have heard that he died[,] much too early… Foucault's exceptional creativity and intelligence we have lost now, and for us I am sad about this loss." Also in the Marbach archive, I came across Elias's copy of Foucault's *The Archaeology of Knowledge*. This book was covered in notes and annotations — it seemed Elias had really "eaten" this book, so to speak.

Sam Binkley: So there is perhaps a long delayed purpose to our conversation today, one to which I hope we will be able to do some measure of justice. So perhaps a good place to start is with a critical comment on Elias written by Nikolas Rose. Rose, writing from a decidedly Foucauldian position, charges Elias with the tendency to falsely naturalize many of the key analytical categories central to his enterprise, particularly the concept of character, subjective interiority and psychological personality.[2] These things, the history of which Elias employs as the foundation for a universal process of psycho-social development, are in fact only of comparatively recent invention, dating perhaps to the works of nineteenth-century psychologists and clinicians. In other words, Elias's trajectory of the civilizing process reifies the internal dynamism of the psychological self in order to project it back as the thread of his historical narrative. And Rose is not the only voice from the Foucauldian tradition to make these charges: Mitchell Dean, for example has made similar charges in his Foucauldian elaboration of what he calls "critical histories."[3] One might say that this is the typical Foucauldian response to Elias.

Cas Wouters: I agree entirely with your suggestion that we should refer to the similarities between these two great figures — they're both historical, they're both focused on power, and on the history of what Foucault calls "the subject" and so on. But on the question of Foucault's insistence that any mention of the psychological processes by which subjects are shaped amounts to a reification of historical categories, I would say not only is this anxiety unnecessary, but that this insistence has led Foucault to a great oversight and simplification regarding the psychic processes of individuals. The formation of "subjectivity," whether viewed from a broad historical perspective or in the case of the history of one individual from birth to adulthood, is a psychic process that is embedded in complex social processes. It touches,

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[2] Nikolas Rose, "Authority and the Genealogy of the Subject," in Paul Heelas, Scott Lash, Scott Morriss (eds.), *Detraditionalization* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996).

[3] Mitchell Dean, *Critical and Effective Histories: Foucault's Methods and Historical Sociology* (London, Routledge, 1994), 186-187, 203-208.

for example, on the question of childrearing practices and on the experiences of children, which are central to the shaping of the individual — but there are no children in Foucault! Upbringing, for Foucault, is strictly a question of discourses among adults. Where are the psychic processes happening in the emotional lives of children, or of people in general? This is a terrible problem for those interested in the relationship between psychic processes and social processes. And it is precisely this attention to the interdependency of psychic and social processes that enables Elias to avoid what is another great problem for Foucault, the reification of the concept of power, which appears as a historical category somehow possessing a life of its own. You don't know whose power, and over whom. Elias is always very specific: he's talking about changing power relationships between established and outsiders, in the case of upbringing between parents and children. Changes in the balance of power are always couched in terms of social processes.

SB: Well, perhaps I should clarify in greater detail what Rose has in mind, and how he proposes what might be a Foucauldian critique of Elias (since Foucault himself never wrote one). The task of a genealogy of subjectivity is to uncover the background categories, practices and technologies that circulate within and through social processes and the relations between social groups, and to tease out the specific effects of these categories in positioning and situating social actors, inscribing them with "interests," "interiorities," and so on, through the implementation and implantation of certain technologies of self reflection. To begin with social life, as a field populated by actors and their interests, is to presuppose something that has a great deal more specificity than is acknowledged. In other words, a history of the techniques of subjectification should precede the history of the social forms, group relations and patterns of interaction through which subjectivity gets negotiated and inscribed. This, I think, is how Rose presents a Foucauldian critique of Elias.

CW: I think individuation, the process in which young children discover that they function as separate beings, is embedded in practices and "techniques of subjectification." This discovery follows from the separation of the mother's womb, from experiencing pain such as hunger without immediate satisfaction, from experiencing that mother is not always there. This process of discovery is one of those universal social and psychic processes that have many different patterns and levels. The same goes for puberty, dying, mourning, sleeping, eating, and other "social forms" that are central in Eliasian studies. They are universal processes because people cannot avoid them, being tied as they are to the biological level. This allows for historical and international comparison and for discovering the socio- and psycho-genesis of the many different patterns and levels of processes such as individuation, individualization, self-reflection, and "subjectification." This means, I think, that the

"history of the techniques of subjectification," as Rose calls it, cannot precede the "history of social forms." It can only be an integral part of it.

SE: I agree with Cas that there are problems with Rose's critique of Elias, particularly on the charge of Elias's supposed universalism. Elias explicitly refused in several publications and discussions any assertion of the universalism of *The Civilizing Process*. He said that it is connected to *European* development from antiquity to the Middle Ages and the century of Enlightenment to early industrialization. Yet he always insisted on the local character of any process of civilization. The German subtitle of his first volume was *Wandlungen des Verhaltens in den weltlichen Oberschichten des Abendlandes*, which translates as*: Changes in the Behavior of the Secular Upper-Classes in the West*.[4] In fact, while he encouraged scholars to analyze the development of non-European societies from a process-oriented point of view, he did not pose his model as a universally valid theory. In light of this, scholars such as Stephen Mennell have attempted to uncover the specific configuration of the civilizing process unique to what he calls *The American Civilizing Process,* and others have done the same for Japan and Russia.[5]

Paddy Dolan: I think the different comfort levels displayed by each theoretical camp when dealing with what we might call "psy" terminology presents an interesting opening on the objectives of each, particularly where it comes to the historical origins of the subject. I have dealt with Rose's critique of Elias in my own research where I have characterized his scepticism toward any terminology associated with psychological interiority as that of a "naïve empiricism."[6] To my mind, efforts to theorize selfhood, subjectivity or habitus that specifically disavow a range of concepts simply for their association with the discourse of psychology are operating with an unduly limited palate. Rose's refusal, on an analytical level, of this terminology is meant to underline that these concepts have a certain historical specificity, that they operate as part of the "psy" complex of knowledges and associated practices that should be analyzed for their productive effects on a personal sense of self. This is fine, but Elias's point in opening the door to a more analytical use of these terms is not to invoke the psychological as an ahistorical window onto subjectivity and its internal dynamics, as Rose seems to suggest, but to point out how psychic processes undergo historical transformations, not merely through theoretical innovations in the discourses of the psychological and social sciences themselves, but through shifting power relations among social groups over quite long periods of

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[4] Norbert Elias, *The Civilising Process: Sociogenetic and Psychogenetic Investigations* (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 2000 [1939].

[5] Stephen Mennell, *The American Civilizing Process* (Cambridge: Polity, 2007).

[6] Paddy Dolan, "Developing consumer subjectivity in Ireland: 1900–80," *Journal of Consumer Culture* 9(1): 2009, 117–141.

time. For Elias, these are processes that occur, not just within the discourses of experts and scientific practitioners, but within the fabric of social life itself as it changes gradually over time.

Consider, for example, how, within the horizons of any particular historical moment, for any particular generation, a new social landscape opens up in which inherited models of feeling and interpersonal conduct inevitably seem "out of date" or "not quite right," thereby opening themselves up to gradual change as the power relations between specific social groups change. For example, the prevailing model during much of the nineteenth century held that one should not speak until spoken to before social superiors. But as class, gender, generational and other group interdependencies became less hierarchical, those in the ostensibly inferior but rising groups came to feel that "enough is enough" and their mode of conduct and feeling underwent specific transformations. Eventually this can become an established model of conduct. Obviously Cas has written about these processes of what he terms informalization and reformalization.[7] These are changes in the emotional dispositions of individuals, and it is possible to use psycho-logical terminology to access these changes, but in doing so it is not necessary to project the universality of a psychological interior as a stable object, accessible to a psychological science. The point from an Eliasian perspective is that people don't need to read Freud, or have any direct contact with a Freudian "apparatus" for them to feel in new ways, or to sense that there are things that shouldn't be said or even contemplated. Neither do people need to read Maslow to feel the urge to "find themselves" or "self-actualize." People may read self-help literature of course, but an Eliasian analysis would see this as part of a set of responses to incremental changes in the social fabric, to changing social interdependencies and, therefore, changing power relations. These changing relations are much broader and older than the specific relation between the psychologist-author and the reader transformed or inscribed from the practice of reading. It seems to me that Foucault was well aware of these broader social processes operating outside the discourses of experts and the practices of disciplinary institutions because he refers to them from time to time. In *Discipline and Punish*, for example, he implies processes of class equalization in his discussion of the tendency of legal systems to increasingly ignore social rank.[8] Similarly, he refers to population growth, to increases in wealth, to capitalism and even the division of labor. But he never quite integrates these changes into a general theory of social development as Elias does. His focus is more on the spaces and practices of objectification, subjectification and normalization than on the social fabric itself.

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[7] Cas Wouters, *Informalization: Manners and Emotions since 1890* (London: Sage, 2007).

[8] Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, translated by A.M. Sheridan (New York: Vintage Books, 1995 [1975]).

SB: Some Foucauldians, Rose in particular, have given some account of how these categories penetrate the social and subjective, but I admit, they tend to focus on the apparatuses and technologies themselves, and devote little time to the actual mediations of these technologies by individuals in social life. I think, twenty-five years after his death, Foucauldian ideas remain highly suggestive, yet underdeveloped as tools for social analysis.

The Sexuality of Children

SE: Well then, perhaps a good approach is to consider a specific case, for example that of sexuality and sexualization as a historical process. This is a theme that is of course close to the interests of Foucault, but also Elias, and particularly as developed in your work, Cas, related to sexualization as an instance of informalization. Perhaps you could say a little about how sexuality can be read from this perspective.

CW: Certainly. I recently presented a paper with the title, "Has the Sexualization Process Changed Direction," a title that is related to an earlier paper of mine from the 1970's titled "Has the Civilizing Process Changed Direction."[9] In the discussion that led to this older paper, some people claimed that the civilizing process, which they summarized as increasing self-controls, had changed direction because now, as the codes of behavior and feeling were loosening up, they saw self-control diminishing. My article of 1976 claimed that the loosening codes and increasing behavioral and emotional alternatives — in one word "informalization" — coincided with increasing demands on self-regulation and with a "controlled decontrolling of emotional controls." This implied that the civilizing process up to the nineteenth century, as described by Elias, had been a phase of formalizing manners and disciplining people. This formalizing process, in which many behavioural and emotional alternatives were regulated and restricted, also entailed a process of de-sexualization, in which many sexual practices were criminalized and sexuality itself was firmly linked to marriage. The twentieth century saw an informalization and a sexualization process, a general increase in the codes of behavioral and emotional alternatives, including a proliferation of sexuality throughout personal and public life. This development was closely accompanied of course by a discourse on the dangers of sexuality for girls and young children.

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[9] Cas Wouters, 2009 'Is het civilisatieproces van richting veranderd?' ("Has the civilizing process changed direction?") *Amsterdams Sociologisch Tijdschrift*, 3/3, 336-361 (1976), of which a somewhat different English version was published in 1977 as "Informalisation and the civilizing process'," in *Human Figurations, essays for/Aufsätze für Norbert Elias*, edited by P.R. Gleichmann, J. Goudsblom and H. Korte, Stichting Amsterdams Sociologisch Tijdschrift, (Amsterdam, 1977), 437-456.

Now, Foucault might have described this as a "deployment" of sexuality, originating in a discourse on medicine, policing, etcetera. I think this account is too one-sided and that the word "deployment" suggests the activity of some unspecified power.[10] As Paddy suggests, a better explanation is found in the generational patterns of change between social groups. For example, while expert discourses no doubt played some role, it was more likely the case that women and young people gradually succeeded in escaping from under the control of the older generations. They sensed and perceived chances for emancipation, and made the most of them. Again and again, in interactions between members of these groups, formalized rules of discipline, established in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, came under attack and changed towards greater informality and leniency, including sexual leniency. Of course, the direction of this change was not always the same: people anxious about the loss of their established positions no doubt tried to contain this proliferation, and one of the preferred instruments for this purpose was, and still is, an appeal to certain myths: the basic innocence of women and children. If one looks back, one finds that the complaints, the laments, about sexualization in the 1920s and '30s are punctuated by these concerns: "all these women who want to know more about sexuality and about the 'facts of life,' are in danger of losing their innocence." Thus social groups invested in the more restrictive morality tried to maintain and re-establish a traditional balance of power through traditional forms of repression. But on the whole and throughout the twentieth century, the people who defended established positions, who wanted to keep women and children in their place, who didn't want girls to discover sexual curiosity before marriage, lost ground to the side of the rising outsiders. That side consisted of women and youngsters and their deputies who saw no harm in knowing "the facts of life" wanted to make them visible, and to liberate them, to open them up for the general experience. It was an ongoing battle between established groups and groups of outsiders, resulting in a less uneven balance of power between the generations and the sexes. So my point is, with regard to Foucault and the question of sexuality, the examination of processes of sexualization and de-sexualization running parallel with those of informalization and formalization, couches the problem in the shifting relations among competing social groups, not in the ether of a "deployment of sexuality." So it seems odd, to go back to Rose's original charge against Elias concerning the reification of historical concepts, that Elias would be the one accused of this reification.

SE: True, but with regard to the process of sexualization, it is important to note that there are other processes going on at the same time, other than those emerging from intergroup dynamics. I am referring to socioeconomic processes on the macro-sociological level. For example, the invention of childhood occurred in the context of

[10] Michel Foucault, *History of Sexuality, Volume 1: An Introduction*, translated by Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage, 1976).

Enlightenment, humanism and the so-called pedagogical era of the eighteenth century, when the power balance between the former ruling nobles and the ruled classes changed in the process of bourgeois emancipation and capitalist development as a whole. After being exploited during an earlier period of capitalist growth, these processes by and by functioned to attribute a greater "value" to children and childhood as a process of psycho-sexual growth and character development. We know from Philip Ariès, for example, that childhood is itself an "invention," and from Foucault we learn that childhood sexuality was the effect of a broader "incitement to discourse" in the form of therapeutic and policing practices, as well as pedagogies and managerial techniques aimed at, for example, the onanistic schoolboy, the pedophile and so on.[11] So these pedagogies, which were themselves the product of a range of expert and institutional discourses, played a strong hand in the shaping of new ways of thinking about childhood. And my question is: how do these accounts of the sexualization of childhood, which depend more on the role of experts and the discourses of expertise, relate to your account of the shifting power balances between social groups?

CW: Well, indeed, the place of children changed in response to the changing power position of middle class groups in Western societies, and the status anxieties that shaped the middle classes as they came to terms with their new position. For the rising bourgeois classes, children became hazardous in adult company because they could say things later on that would give away secrets of their family life. So the invention of children's innocence and the consequent need to enforce their segregation from adult company, to keep them apart from sexual talk and anything related to sexuality, were two sides of the same process. And the "invention" of childhood ran in tandem with the "invention" of children's sexuality, but for children themselves, this sexualization of childhood took the form of a de-sexualization, keeping sex away from them so that they wouldn't talk about it later and embarrass the family. But this segregation shaped a specific feeling among children that is lost from a Foucauldian position: a curiosity and a desire, which later emerged as a demand for less formal norms around sexuality. This goes back to my earlier complaint that there are no children in Foucault. It's as if child sexuality takes the form of a conversation between experts, parent, teachers and so on. There are no children, but also there is no sense that changes in sexuality occur within the changing balance of power between social groups, which imply changes in psychological patterns of self-regulation, in personality structure.

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[11] Foucault, *History of Sexuality, Volume 1: An Introduction*; Philippe Ariès, *Histoire de la vie privée*, (with Georges Duby), 5 volumes: I. De l'Empire romain à l'an mil; II. De l'Europe féodale à la Renaissance; III. De la Renaissance aux Lumières; IV. De la Révolution à la Grande guerre; V. De la Première Guerre mondiale à nos jours, (Seuil. 1985-1986-1987).

SB: I think this leads us back to our original question, and to Rose's charge that Eliasian approaches tend to traffic in reified categories. For example, in his critique of the repressive hypothesis, Foucault uncovers the ways in which the repression of a desire, just as much as the emancipation of that desire, has the effect of organizing, or inscribing desire itself.[12] Desire is the effect of its own "problematization," or of the specific anxieties and concerns that are mobilized around its prevention and interpretation. There is no necessary reality or anxiety underlying the efforts to prohibit, permit, and interpret a given object that we can call sexuality. Foucault goes to great lengths to describe the social construction of something that Elias takes more or less for granted — that something like sexual desire exists and that it is inevitably an object of a certain anxiety, prior to the efforts to restrict or emancipate it. While Elias (and also you, Cas, in your work) locates the dynamics of sexualization and de-sexualization in the protocols of social groups, their changing figurations and their negotiations for prestige and social status, Foucault traces them to the discourses of experts, in the books of Krafft Ebing, Havelock Ellis, and later in the psychological and instructional literature on intimacy, child rearing and the family. In short, it is through the institutional inscription of a discourse on sexuality that these categories are insinuated into the lives of individuals and groups, before they can be negotiated and "civilized" as such.

CW: That is where I would disagree. The balance of power between parents and children—or parents and their representatives and children—and between men and women, husbands and wives et cetera, is much more influential than whatever any specialist has to say. And in whatever ways it is constructed in discourses and/or in power struggles, the desire for sexual gratification is shared among virtually all species, and the desire for some relational warmth and intimacy is found in all humans (homo sapiens). These are two realities underlying the efforts to prohibit, permit, and interpret. It is on this basis that I've introduced the concept of a lust-balance, the balance between the longing for sexual gratification and the longing for relational intimacy.[13] Of course, I think that all this literature of the specialists that Foucault celebrates is very important as a source of information, and for its function as a catalyst of this dynamic of sexualization and de-sexualization. But I think it has to be read less as a simple "deployment of institutional power," for what this "deployment" actually means can only be accessed in the broader context of shifting power balances such as that between the generations and the sexes. I don't think these books hardly ever, if ever, have functioned as a motor of change. If they were successful, they have functioned to accelerate or inhibit the process. They may have

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[12] Foucault, *History of Sexuality, Volume 1: An Introduction*.

[13] See Cas Wouters, *Sex and Manners: Female Emancipation in the West 1890 – 2000* (London: Sage, 2004).

made some parents more secure, other parents more insecure, and others nervous for raising questions that parents of an earlier generation did not raise. But eventually, of course, most or all experts had enough "survival instinct" to go with the flow. And ever since the late nineteenth century, this "flow" has been in the direction of sexualization and of diminishing power differences between women and men, children and parents. The thought that specialists and experts operate directly to pro-duce childhood sexuality and the anxieties around it is ludicrous to me.

PD: I think I see a middle point between these two alternatives. It is certainly true, following Foucault, that discourses of experts serve as a form of functional specialization, that they foster increasing social interdependency not only among specialists and the laity, but also amongst the laity itself. But what's underlying this process, and what Foucault tends to overlook, are the emotions that people feel in intimate life, sexual life and in the life of the family. I think it is not helpful to take the strict Foucauldian line that these anxieties and these emotions are the specific product of problematizations. In other words, I'm not sure that it is possible to "deploy" an anxiety, though it may be possible to deploy a discourse around an existing or forming anxiety, to give it clarity and a terminology to express itself. This way, the shared emotional processes of social groups have an enormous effect on the capacity of expert discourses to gain traction within a particular group. This is the point that Elias makes in his discussion of the growth of etiquette manuals. He describes the effects of a rapid social change, in which people don't know how to deal with strangers, and need specific counsel on how to do it. Or under the conditions of increasing social mobility, in which minor nobles suddenly have to learn to behave in court society, without possessing the appropriate skills. In both of these cases, groups experience anxiety, and turn to the guidance of experts, who in turn reframe or describe back to them their initial concerns. Experts on sexuality, childhood, family intimacy and so on respond to these anxieties, serving as cultural intermediaries, whose instruction helps to domesticate the anxieties resulting from the unstable social position of these groups. While experts might have invented the technology to deal with the anxiety, they haven't invented the social experiences to which expertise addresses itself.

But there is some common ground between Elias and Foucault on the question of sexuality and the body. At the start of *The History of Sexuality* Foucault notes that codes were quite lax in regulating what would later be seen as indecent. Though he doesn't go into the same empirical detail evident in *The Civilizing Process*, I think this can be read as similar to advancing thresholds of shame concerning the body. The developing standards of conduct that Elias identifies are not far away from Foucault's explosion of discourse surrounding sexuality. Both discuss the spatial organization of bedrooms and new norms of separate "sleeping arrangements" between family members. Both maintain that the increasing pressure to embody

either new models of etiquette or new practices of sexuality occurred in the higher classes before gradual diffusion to the working classes. Foucault's analysis of the psychiatrization of certain forms of pleasure is also reminiscent of Elias's discussion of the psychologization of emotions.[14] Although Elias is sometimes characterized (and caricatured) as a Freudian, he was also critical of Freud for reifying the concepts of id, ego and superego and not seeing relations within families as part of a broader, historical social process and structure. For his part, I think Foucault says at one point that he's not trying to demonstrate that the repressive hypothesis is wrong, but to show how sexuality becomes more an object of discourse. It's difficult to see Elias's ideas in terms of an already existing sexuality that then gets socially controlled as he didn't see nature and society as opposed to each other. He often wrote about our biological capacity to learn, to become self-controlled, to be sexual, but that this must be activated and channeled through social interaction. But, ultimately, I think Elias's explanation is more compelling than Foucault's because it doesn't depend on multiple sets of direct, discrete relationships between therapists and patients, teachers and pupils, and instead puts these all together in a fluid, integrated network of people. The new experts for Elias would really be a case of increasing functional specialization, brought on by broader changes.

Etiquette, Expertise and Social Shame

SE: It seems that Paddy has proposed a productive synthesis that centers on the role of expertise in the management of emotions, interpersonal relations and interiority in daily life. For this reason, maybe it is helpful to consider the broader methodological and historiographical questions posed by the study of etiquette books. Books relating the counsel of experts on the proper conduct of life have appeared as central in both Eliasian and Foucauldian scholarship, though perhaps Elias deals more with advice on the management of interpersonal conduct (or etiquette) while Foucault centers on discourses that circulate at one remove from social life — medico-juridical discourses, for example, discourses on security and criminology, or managerial discourses. In the case of etiquette manuals, this material can be analyzed in several ways, and Cas has made significant contributions to methodological discussions on how to study these texts. I recently published a paper on "Using Qualitative Content Analysis of Popular Literature for Uncovering Long-Term Social Processes."[15] In it, I argue that we can consider three relatively distinct levels of analysis. The first level would read etiquette manuals as directly reflecting distinct social changes between groups, for example, between the sexes in the workplace. One

[14] Foucault, *History of Sexuality, Volume 1: An Introduction*, 105; Elias, *The Civilising Process: Sociogenetic and Psychogenetic Investigations*, 397-414.

[15] Stefanie Ernst, "Using Qualitative Content Analysis of Popular Literature for Uncovering Long-Term Social Processes: The Case of Gender Relations in Germany," *Historical Social Research*, Vol. 34, No. 1, (2009), 252-269.

would consider the social location of the author, the intended audience, changes over the course of successive editions and so on. This would require an approach something akin to a discourse or content analysis, aimed at clarifying the generalizability of the changes being described. The question then becomes: under which circumstances did the topic come to be discussed, with what reference to other texts, among what social groups, and so on? The point here is to trace *real* changes in interaction patterns through changes in etiquette books. The second level would consider etiquette books as if the things that were described were not necessarily taking place, but were considered desirable or wished for by the book's author, or by the readers of the books. This would mean reading etiquette manuals as prescriptive or didactic, not necessarily as describing real behaviors or real situations, but as providing accounts of how people should behave in these situations. The third level is in the effect of etiquette manuals in setting new social standards as a counter-development against a prevailing social norms, as illustrated in the case of women's self-help literature, which set out specifically to empower women to succeed in the work-place. These manuals focused new attention on taken-for-granted habits of interaction, proposing new strategies for professional and interpersonal life. Considered on these three levels — as reflective, prescriptive or critical — allows us to position etiquette manuals in relation to wider patterns of social change.

CW: Yes, but I would add that manners books are a quite specific genre with a long history, allowing for long-term historical comparisons, and also that manners books, unlike other advisories are written specifically for social climbers: discretely, without ever making this (too) explicit, they present the manners that may help to enable social inclusion to those who are or have been excluded. These people of lower status might take a look into a manners book in search of a particular type of advice, but usually they were out for more than that. As they aspire to acceptance in higher social circles, readers are eager to learn about the sensibilities, practices and manners of those who move in the centers of power and their good society. This explains why authors of manners books need not claim any other expert knowledge than of the ways of life in good society, and why they are not backed up by any specific professional affiliation. It also explains why good societies serve a modeling function and why good manners usually trickle down the social ladder. At times of collective social emancipation, however, when people from differing social strata were forced to intermingle and to give up the social distance they typically kept from one another, manners also trickled up. When whole groups ascended by getting represented in established centres of power and by penetrating to the inner sanctums of their good societies, some of their manners rise up the social ladder with them. In order to avoid social conflict and maintain their elevated position, the people in the centres of power and good society had to increasingly accept rising groups into their ranks. As part of this, the former had to show more respect for the

ideals, sentiments, morals, and manners of the latter. Social mixing then coincides with some mixing of codes and ideals, and the sediments of such mixing processes can be discerned in longer-term changes in etiquette books: the social codes of good societies came to represent an increasing plurality of social groups and strata.

Thus the dominant code of good manners, modelled after the example of good society, reflects *and* prescribes (to refer to your threefold approach, Stefanie) the power balance between all those groups and strata that are integrated in society at large. This is the point I tried to make in my books *Sex and Manners* and *Informalization.* I presented a wide range of examples showing the explanatory connection between changes in the codes of manners since roughly 1890 and processes of social emancipation and national integration. To get a full view of changes in the dominant regimes of manners and emotions from reading manners books demands a sensitive reading that is perhaps somewhat different than, for example, that found in Foucauldian "discourse analysis." It is more strongly directed at what the changes found in manners books mean in terms of relations of power and dependency between people as well as in terms of demands on their emotion management or self-regulation. Changes in socially allowed expressions of superiority and inferiority, for example, clearly refer to both changing demands on self-regulation and changing relations between people.

PD: Yes, it is very important to grasp the modifications over successive editions of any given manual. For example, a directive might disappear from one edition to the next, which doesn't necessarily mean that a certain behavior has become permitted, so much as that its prohibition has become so accepted as to be unworthy of mention. Elias encounters this in *The Civilizing Process*, where, at an earlier point there might appear an injunction against vomiting at the table, or putting food back in the common bowl. Where this rule disappears in later editions, it would be a mistake to conclude a reversal of the pressures toward self control, as instead, it indicates the advance of those pressures to the point of second nature.

SB: Perhaps an interesting place to compare Elias and Foucault's different approaches to advisory texts is in the way each addresses the problem of shame. The avoidance of shame in social performances was central to Elias's approach, particularly under the conditions of social mobility. One feared being shamed in front of one's peers, but one also feared the shame imposed by one's subalterns: the servants were removed at a certain point and replaced with dumbwaiters for the bringing of food from the kitchen to the dining room, because servants were also audiences for the performances of the elites, and conduits of information that might shame a family in the eyes of others. Shame also appears for Foucault, but in a very different context. It could be said that shame would function as part of the honorific codes that regulate sovereign power, but by the time of the eighteenth century, with the dissemina-

tion of institutions (clinics, prisons, military barracks, schools), and with the colonization of social space by these institutions, shame becomes less significant. Indeed, part of the authority of institutions derives from their ability to bracket out the kinds of shame that would be experienced in interpersonal, intergroup relations. For example, the changed relations between doctors and patients, teachers and students and so on, all acquire new authority to inscribe the personal from their ability to shelter the individual from shame. The elimination of the kinds of direct interpersonal authority one encounters in sovereign power, where honorific regard is implicit within the spectacle of the sovereign, is displaced by a disciplinary power and the clinical gaze, which is precisely without a face, without honor and without the power to shame.[16] Foucault's account of the incitement to discourse is essentially one in which the shame, or the flush of embarrassment associated with frank and honest disclosure of sexual secrets, is bracketed in a sheltered space of a tolerant, scientific detachment. You could talk about childhood sexuality and your experience of sexual desire under the suspension of the normal sanctions of shame that might result from this. So, there is another current at work that perhaps the focus on etiquette cannot grasp: the more social life comes to replicate the logic of institutional relations characterized by the facelessness of disciplinary authority, the more the sources of shame that etiquette manuals were meant to safeguard against become obsolete, absorbed into the anonymity of disciplinary power itself.

PD: That is an important observation, Sam, though it would also be possible to think of the disciplinary effects in Eliasian terms, as attempts at what Elias called the "controlled decontrolling of emotions." We have to remember that Elias saw civilizing processes as quite contradictory; although a central aspect of these processes is the growing social constraint towards self-restraint, activated largely through advancing thresholds of shame, this also produces a sense of *homo clausus* which induces each person to imagine him- or herself as a self-contained individual. As shame is experienced more individually (or "subjectively") people look for help to get past this feeling and reveal their true identity, their "inner" self. I also think Elias might not see such an opposition between social life and institutions; for him, social life occurs in institutions like families, religious groups, work organizations, clubs and so on.

Science and the Hermeneutics of the Self

SB: To speak of the detached authority of institutions and its effect on social life, it seems we are drawn into a wider discussion of the historical emergence of scientific objectivity itself, and its significance for the shaping of new subjectivities over time.

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[16] Michel Foucault, *Birth of the Clinic: An Archaeology of Medical Perception*, translated by A.M. Sheridan (London: Tavistock, 1973).

Both Elias and Foucault were drawn to questions of the status of scientific discourse, and the social and institutional processes by which scientific knowledge might assume a specific authority. Foucault's linkage of knowledge and power, and his account of the alignment of science with the deployment of other apparatuses of social control, with the marginalization of the insane et cetera, is well known. Elias had similar ideas, it seems, although for him these were less a problem of power, and more, as we have already discussed, linked to changes in the unique figurations of social groups.

PD: Yes. For Elias, as humans learn to control nature, and other humans, and to control themselves, they assume a more "scientized" view of the world. It becomes possible, with lengthening of chains of interdependence, with increasing constraint of impulse and so on, to develop a more relative detachment on the ways in which processes interact and affect one another. Elias argues against the view of the scientific disposition as reflective of a universal, cognitive apparatus for securing objective access to the world. Instead, he describes a process by which, gradually, over many, many generations, over centuries, as human societies become at once more differentiated and more integrated, more pacified and interdependent, a mode of detachment relative to one's environment becomes possible. As human societies move away from a form in which the specific relationship to any object occurs always in terms of implicit competition, to one in which analytical and reflective distance is conceivable, abstraction itself becomes increasingly possible. It is possible to symbolically represent the world, and then through that they can make scientific discoveries. Basically, as people become less afraid of "nature," they can start to control it to some extent, which further decreases their fear. Of course this doesn't mean that people stop being emotional in relation to things, but the extreme fears and debilitating effects are diminished. People become curious and excited by the prospect of new knowledge, and this is a different emotional experience compared to the fear of losing's one's life, family or home. People obviously develop knowledge both over time (using the stock of knowledge from previous generations) and in tandem with others (through the division of labor and functional specialization). This latter development requires the maintenance of trust so that people feel they can depend on others. In short, the changing status of knowledge emerges from this increasing integration, which is itself the result of a gradual and broad increase in social trust and cooperation. Decreased competition makes it possible for people to detach themselves more from immediate competitive necessities of this or that object.

CW: Yes, Paddy, but I don't think it was just a decrease in competition. The word decrease may be misleading because it was rather a change in the pattern of cooperation and competition. As competition was increasingly regulated and pacified, it

became more intense as well as more concealed, because a more open display of competition was increasingly perceived as one-upmanship, as a display of superiority feelings, and therefore as a threat to cooperation. There was, over time, a shift in the balance between cooperation and competition, one that is directly tied to increasing levels of societal and global interdependency, increasing social differentiation and integration, lengthening chains of dependence and so on. When competition became less violent, for example, other collective forms of competition emerged. Today, the intensity of cooperation itself has become a means of competition. This may be considered to be another aspect of "the anonymity of disciplinary power," as Sam just called it: you have to cooperate in more competitive ways because otherwise you get left behind. And the rising of this tension balance, also the higher level of awareness of tensions between competition and cooperation, involves a constantly pressing need for reflection, for developing a sharper eye for oneself and others. To scrutinize situations and relations, and behave as flexibly as possible in them, is propelling the level of detachment, which is, indeed, a necessary condition for all scientific progress.

SB: There are some impressive similarities with Foucault on this point. For Foucault, the emergence of a scientific discourse in Western, or early modern societies, comes with the consolidation and integration of a set of conventions for the production of truth claims under the umbrella of Enlightenment reason and its attendant institutions. Through this process, there is a fundamental shift in the character of truth itself in the direction of detachment: in his lectures of 1973-74, published in English as *Psychiatric Power*, Foucault describes a shift in the field of medical knowledge from what he terms a technology of truth-event to one of truth demonstration.[17] In the case of the former, where the evidence of disease appears only fleetingly in the symptoms of the patient, truth was a temporally bound occurrence, limited by a specific ritual practice for which the doctor must be well prepared, just as a soldier must be going into battle. In the case of the latter, which occurs in ordered, disciplinary institutions where surveillance over the course of a long term, statistical medicine and autopsy effectively detemporalized the search for truth, knowledge became a detached function of the disciplinary institution. In the case of the former, truth was some-thing that presupposed and necessarily engaged the observer in a specific relation to himself. In the case of the latter, detachment from the self was a precondition of knowledge — a theme he takes up later in his lectures of 1981-82, *Hermeneutics of the Subject*.[18] So, between Foucault and Elias, similar themes emerge linking cooperation and consolidation of power with the enactment

[17] Michel Foucault, *Psychiatric Power: Lectures at the College de France, 1973-1974* (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006).

[18] Michel Foucault, *Hermeneutics of the Subject: Lectures at the Collège de France , 1981-1982*, edited by Frederic Gros (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).

of epistemic distance. Foucault describes, in the *Birth of the Clinic*, how the stethoscope served a metaphorical function in literalizing this distance — in this case, the distance the doctor takes from the body of the patient.[19] All of this has implications for how we talk, not just about the rise of scientific knowledge, about how that knowledge shapes the attitudes of the subject who inquires into the truth of her own subjectivity. As the forms of knowledge change, so do the subjectivities that draw from this these know-ledges to uncover the truth of themselves.

PD: Yes, but — to return to what is emerging as a powerful theme in this discussion — the reason for a transformation in a distinctly modern mode of self knowledge derives, not just from the innovations of that class of elite producers charged with the task of self reflection — the ones we call philosophers and human scientists, whose communication with the everyday has yet to be adequately explained from a Foucauldian standpoint — but from changing social figurations in everyday life itself. A new subjectivity, one characterized by a new inwardness, or by the belief in a new inwardness, and a distinct sense of an emotional interior, as an object to be known and interpreted with the aid of science, develops from a wider process of relative class equalization. At an earlier time, people experienced emotion in terms of practices of deference to their superiors, in which emotions are associated very clearly with social hierarchy. Under the effects of increased interdependence and class equalization, emotions are disentangled with hierarchies, and become projected onto this new domain, the subjective interior. People tend to lose their social compass as a means of finding the source of emotional experience, yet they still experience emotions, which they now imagine emanating from within. So if modern subjectivity is understood in terms of the emergence of new ways of searching for the truth of oneself, this must be understood not simply as a philosophical innovation, but as a reflection of changing social figurations. In other words, the *homo clausus,* as Elias termed it, or the myth of the individual subject, does not come directly from practices of the self, though people may of course engage in practices that could be described in this way, but through changing dependencies (and therefore power relations) between people of divergent class positions. These dependencies are not exclusively based on class, of course, but also upon other group relations that have changed, and which consequently channel emotions in particular directions (in this case, inwards). I think Foucault's use of the word "practices" compared to Elias's insistence on processes is telling here. Maybe it's Foucault's continued attachment to philosophy that made him sometimes look more for invariance or specificity, and less for gradual change or linkage over successive stages of development. For example, the practices of the self described in *The History of Sexua-*

[19] Foucault, *Birth of the Clinic,* 164.

lity seem to be designed for universal application; there's little sense of how they might change depending on changing social contexts.

SB: I agree. One flaw in Foucault's approach is the tendency to discuss social planners, theorists and policies, as well as philosophers and philosophical endeavors, in a way that allows them to bleed over into a discussion of populations and everyday practices. A more rigorous Foucauldianism for the purposes of this kind of historical sociological explanation — and I believe Nikolas Rose comes close to this in many ways — is one that takes up the mechanisms and technologies by which these effects are dispersed and insinuated into daily life on the level of individual practice, though even here there is always the danger of a certain reductionism. This is particularly problematic where we attempt to consider contemporary formations of subjectivity in terms of the relative status of self-knowledge, or a hermeneutics of the self. Much has been made in recent Foucauldian philosophical scholarship of his later lectures and on the care of the self as if it were a contemporary possibility.[20] But people today are typically quite indifferent to the status of anything we might call a truth of the self. We know, since the postmodernism of Jameson, Baudrillard et al, that the populations of advanced capitalist societies are largely disinterested in truth, and totally willing to accept simulations of real things in place of reality. While they may from time to time acquire a taste for interiority and its mysteries, and may even feel, if we follow Anthony Giddens, that forms of supervised introspection provide relief from ontological insecurities, modern people are remarkably indifferent to the question of their own self-authenticity, or to the "truth of the self."[21]

Governmentality and Informalization

SB: Cas, it seems that one of your most noted innovations within the field of Eliasian scholarship is the concept of the informalization process, which you have already discussed a little in the context of sexuality. This is a concept that has a specific relevance to the contemporary conditions of life, and something I have found useful in my own scholarship.[22] Can you tell us, in a very general sense, what this concept entails and how it derives from Elias?

CW: The idea of informalization was developed primarily to help understand the increasing "permissiveness" of the 1960s and 1970s, and to assess whether this invol-

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[20] Edward McGushin, *Foucault's Askesis: An Introduction to the Philosophical Life* (Chicago, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2007).

[21] Anthony Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1991).

[22] Sam Binkley, *Getting Loose: Lifestyle Consumption in the 1970's* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007).

ved a change in the direction of what Norbert Elias calls a civilizing process. Elias shows in detail how between the fifteenth and the nineteenth centuries regimes of manners and emotions had expanded and become increasingly strict and detailed — a formalization of manners, and had given rise to a particular type of self-regulation with a particular conscience-formation — a disciplining of people. The concept of informalization was coined to indicate that the changes of the 1960s did indeed imply a change of direction regarding manners, from a formalizing to an informalizing trend. It also suggested a continuation regarding the disciplining of people because the rules of informality implied a continued increase of the demand for self-regulation. However, this was not the type of self-regulation that Elias had described. Take, for example, this quote from Elias: "This in turn requires both a certain raising of living standards and a cultivation of self control or superego functions in the subject peoples of the Western models."[23] Reading this text, I put a circle around "or," because this is one of the many places where it seems that Elias saw self control mainly through superego functions, dominating over ego functions. But informalization also involves an overall increase in external social controls towards developing such self-controls as being reflexive, showing presence of mind, considerateness, role-taking, and the ability to compromise.

Moreover, most "transgressions" (in terms of the old codes) are, under conditions of informalization, now permitted to some extent, so long as they are kept within certain bounds. The same goes for emotion controls. You can bring emotions that used to be repressed back into consciousness and even into public discussion, but there is a limit. You can undertake a decontrol of your learned emotional controls, but you must see to it that this process remains a *controlled* decontrolling of emotions. In short, you may slacken the reins but never run wild — which requires more skill and self-regulation than simply remaining completely constrained in the first place. You have to decide for yourself how far you go, but whatever you decide, your manners should look "natural" or "authentic" and without any display of the more direct feelings of superiority and inferiority. Such is the "emancipation of emotions": an emancipation that, like all social and psychic emancipation, brings heightened demands upon emotion- and self-regulation. This emancipation implied a change from conscience to consciousness, and thus a more open and leveled flow of exchange between, in Freudian terms, people's Ego, Superego and their animal nature, or, in my terms, between their conscious self-regulation, their self-controls functioning largely automatically as habitus, conscience or "second nature," and the drives and impulses deriving from their "first nature." I have introduced the terms "third nature" and "third-nature personality" as sensitising concepts to illuminate these changes. The term "second nature" refers to a self-regulating conscience that functions to a great extent automatically. The term "third nature" is indicative of a

[23] Elias, *The Civilizing Process,* 432.

development from this "second-nature" self-regulation in the direction of a more reflexive and flexible one. To the extent that it has become "natural" to attune oneself to the pulls and pushes both of first and second nature as well as the dangers and chances, short term and long term, of any particular situation or relation, a third-nature type of personality has been developing.

This suggests a very different phase in the processes of increasing self-constraint that Elias is most readily identified with. Elias's view of the connection between the formalization of manners and the rise of a second nature type of personality was corroborated by his evidence from early modernity through the nineteenth century. However, from the last decades of the ninetenth century to the present, continued expansion and intensification of social competition and cooperation has triggered further social and psychic emancipation and integration: drives, impulses, and emotions have tended to become more easily accessible to consciousness, while their control has come to be less strongly based upon an authoritative conscience. This implied a decline of unthinking – more or less automatic – acceptance of all sorts of authority. As this unthinking acceptance decreased, the respect and self-respect of all citizens have become less directly dependent upon external social controls and more directly upon their reflexive and calculating abilities, and therefore upon a particular pattern of self-control in which the "unthinking acceptance" of the dictates of psychic authority or conscience also decreased. In this way, social processes of power relations and manners between social groups becoming less hierarchical and rigid have been connected with psychic processes. I don't know whether Elias would have endorsed the term "third nature," but he was generous enough to fully accept "informalization" as a correction to his theory, and was happy with it. I relate the story in the second appendix to my book *Informalization*. He also adopted the term; for example, the first part of his book *The Germans* is called "Civilization and Informalization.' [24]

SB: And there is an interesting point of intersection with Foucault here, though it hasn't been very well developed. Robert Van Krieken has suggested that there is a provocative parallel between the concept of informalization and the Foucauldian concern with governmentality.[25] Foucault's model of governmentality was one that he introduced in his lectures of 1978-79, and was meant to provide an alternative account of the practice of subjection, or subjectification, in the light of certain criticisms of the model of discipline, which was said to be somewhat over-deterministic, but also too limited to institutional contexts. Where the disciplinary model might apply to such total institutions as prisons, hospitals, the military and so on, in which optimal functionality was an institutional imperative, Foucault felt he wanted to explore a wider model in which control was applied to broader populations through

[24] Norbert Elias, *The Germans,* edited by Michael Schröter (Cambridge: Polity, 1996).
[25] Robert Van Krieken, *Norbert Elias* (London and New York: Routledge, 1998).

the government of economic life. Here, institutional docility, or compliance with institutional mandates, has already been secured, and what is demanded is the specific exercise of freedom by individuals. So governmentality emerges as the power of government to enhance the capacity of the individual to exercise his own freedom, usually in the sphere of liberal politics, but also in the sphere of economic conduct. While Foucault avoids a periodization of these various moments, it is true that governmentality assumes a certain highly-developed level of capacity for self-regulation, already secured by disciplinary power. It is as if power says, "we have achieved sufficient consensus on the levels of self-control such that you are free to govern yourself now, provided that you direct your freedom toward these specific goals, and conceive of your freedom along specific lines — specifically, in terms of enhanced economic undertaking." Or in the context of neoliberalism, this becomes: "govern yourself competitively; become the entrepreneur of yourself. Maximize your human capital." So, like informalization, governmentality both assumes the universality of a certain level of self-control, and also adds a specific constraint, that one demonstrate one's freedom, that one produce an expressive self, according to certain prescribed forms.

CW: I see something like a relationship there, indeed, but the differences in language and the lack of periodization makes the assessment of similarities difficult. What precedes "governmentality"? Informalization processes are preceded by formalization processes, but what is the disciplinary power that had already secured that highly-developed level of capacity for self-regulation on which basis "governmentality" was launched? Where do I look to find it? Is it another invisible hand of the same power that governs economic life? And where can I look to find that government with the power to enhance the power of the individual to exercise his own freedom? To me, this language almost sounds religious, as if "the power" says, you're still in my panopticon. I can understand it, but not well, and not without irritation and regret. Where Elias points to factual power relations and factual blind processes – the manifold and polymorphous unintended consequences of competition, cooperation, and social interweaving, Foucault's analysis of power and government is not sociologically precise enough, it remains philosophically vague and abstract.

SB: Perhaps the difference, then, is that while Foucault is talking about the instrumental-rational conduct of the market, Elias is talking about the expressive conduct of intimate life? These informal conventions require you to identify and mobilize your emotional capacities, to express yourself and realize your self as a condition of group membership. To achieve certain interests, such as the sustaining of a long-term relationship, you have to express agencies that operate outside of conventions of self-control. According to your informalization model you have to develop the

capacity for self-expression and managed release. It's a career skill: you've got to be able to feel. This is a point Foucault draws out in his discussion of the neoliberal theory of the Chicago school of economic thought, and Gary Becker in particular, where economic rationalities are seen to penetrate social rationalities generally.[26] Through the lens of the neoliberal, we come to view our marriages, our health, our friendships, our happiness, all as enterprises. And at the center of this is the mandate to act in one's own interest, which not only means acting instrumentally in the market, but also acting expressively, to mobilize one's feelings, one's passions and one's desires in order to "achieve success" in social and intimate life.

CW: But the emancipation of emotions as a process is propelled by social competition that has pervaded all sectors of life. It must be understood not just as a career in the economic sense, as a job, but also as a biographical career, as a set of skills required for the management of one's life, in terms of group membership, relationships, interpersonal skills, authenticity, et cetera. By calling it the commodification and commercialization of human feeling, as Arlie Hochschild does, you suggest that behind all "emotional labour" – surface and deep – there must be a layer that is still untouched. I think that thought is quite romantic and nostalgic.

SE: I think it's a question of the normative implied in either perspective. The mandate imposed by either governmentality or informalization, to become an entrepreneur of oneself or to set loose one's feelings, assumes a uniquely normative content when one places it within specific gender or class contexts. These injunctions become techniques for the excluded groups we mentioned earlier, or under the conditions of social mobility, for "formerly-outsiders" to succeed when admitted to the ranks of the insiders. This is precisely the case for professional women today, who are advised in career literature to undertake the project of self-emancipation: to "try to make the best on your own," "become your own chief," and "make yourself a presentation" and so on. In other words the expressive, entrepreneurial mandate has two sides: it can be hegemonic or emancipatory. For example, in post-war Germany there was a discussion of the appropriate role for women in a devastated economy in which the presence of men was significantly weakened as a result of war. With men missing either as the result of war casualties, or interned in POW camps, the question was raised as to what extent women should assume roles of leadership. With women's labor required for national reconstruction, nobody asked whether their hard work was feminine or unfeminine. Then in the mid 1950s men returned home with significantly reduced status, alienated from their families, and with damaged masculinity. This situation raised important questions about the role of women in professional settings. I quote from a popular etiquette book of that time:

[26] Michel Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1978-79*, edited by Michel Senellart, translated by Graham Burchell (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).

"Sometimes a relationship becomes more complicated if a woman is superior to a man. It is always better for a woman to assume a stature of grace and agility, which also implies strength of character and professional efficiency, than to assume the role of feminine coquettishness. Men like real women with motherly instincts more than outmoded piles of files, grouchy old spinsters who are eaten away by ambition and craving for recognition. A woman has to maintain a good working atmosphere if she wants to assert herself."[27] Then in the 1960s, the women's liberation movement affected a process of informalization that invited women to empower themselves. They explored themselves and played hardball in the workplace, competing with men, wearing men's clothes et cetera, and demanding concessions from the patriarchal culture of the workplace. As this case illustrates, techniques for increased self-organization, expressive conduct and entrepreneurial empowerment in economic and institutional settings should not be described one-sidedly as mechanisms of surveillance and control. They also entail an emancipatory potential.

The Planned and the Unplanned

SB: Perhaps one useful way to draw together all these threads regarding the underlying character of Elisian and Foucauldian thought is to grasp how each understands the effect of intentional planning in the transformation of societal processes. To what extent does human planning impact long-term change? Does human intentionality actually impact historical processes and the production of subjectivity? Elias is, of course, the great theorist of the gradual, "unplanned change," of the long term, unintentional, incremental transformation of society without reflective agents. It would be, for example, a gross misreading of Elias to presume that the court society was a vanguard, that intended to impose a plan for civilizational change in the direction of self control. Foucault, however, is widely read as the great theorist of the plan — of the "great confinement," the "swarming of disciplinary mechanisms," of the "biopoliticization of populations" and so on, which are all implementations of specific plans that variously resulted in the production of unique subjectivities, though perhaps in ways unintended by the planners. And this is where he tends to draw the most vociferous criticism from social theorists: did Foucault's great planners really exert the kind of influenced he imagined? This is the criticism made by Anthony Giddens of *The History of Sexuality* in the first chapter of his book *The Transformation of Intimacy*.[28] However, Foucault is not always as guilty of this "metaphysics of the plan" as he is made out to be. The plans he describes, from the mobilization against childhood masturbation to the plague stricken village, always go awry, or inevitably leave spaces open for resistance, or for being implemented

[27] Illa Andreae (Lachmann), *Die Kunst der guten Lebensart. Spielregeln im Umgang mit Menschen* [The Good Way of Life: Rules for Good Company] (Freiburg: Herder, 1963) , 114.

[28] Anthony Giddens, *The Transformation of Intimacy: Sexuality, Love, and Eroticism in Modern Societies* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1993).

otherwise on the local level. There's a wonderful quote that Dreyfus and Rabinow attribute to a personal communication: "People know what they do; they frequently know why they do what they do; but what they don't know is what what they do does."[29] In other words, while we can't reduce everything to the implementation of a plan, it is inevitable that plans have great, if unintended, consequences.

CW: Certainly, and a great part of what makes up people's plans is the intention to become more independent from others. Much of what entails becoming more rich, for example, or more powerful, is becoming more independent. They may organize some business, and if they are successful in pursuing their plans, what they have succeeded in attaining is greater independence. But only partly, for at the same time, they have established and enlarged an interdependency network on which they themselves, together with all the others who are involved, have become dependent. In sum, their attempt at making themselves more independent has made more people more dependent on each other. And this is the paradox that Elias describes and exploits. Efforts toward independence foster new forms of dependence and a growing expansion and density of the interdependency networks. In a zero-sum contest with an emerging bourgeoisie and a sitting monarch, the head of a state was dethroned, but the insurrectionary subjects discovered that they had become too dependent on state monopolies such as on collecting taxes and on the use of violent means, to take seriously the option of demolishing the state. It was impossible because people had become too dependent upon a dense and extended networks of interdependencies fostered by the state. The same process is operating on a global level: states becoming increasingly interdependent. These are what Elias called blind processes, unplanned, unintended consequences of social competition, cooperation and interweaving. I think they are far more significant for the direction of social change than the intentional plans of states, known or unknown.

PD: Yes, another main difference between Foucault and Elias is that though Foucault recognized multiple power centers or that power comes from everywhere, and acknowledged unintended consequences, Elias makes these blind processes the very bases of his theories. These processes also account for the continuity behind what might look like arbitrary and haphazard sequences of events. Elias chose to look for connections across time, which has become quite unusual in the social sciences and humanities. He also acknowledged that people of course make plans and, depending on the power ratios within a given figuration, those plans might come to fruition. And this point is made by Stephen Mennell in his book *The American Civilizing Process:* when a particular nation state like the United States becomes very powerful, it acquires more scope for directing the decisions of politicians of other, smaller

[29] Hubert Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow, *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutic* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 187.

nation states.[30] So there is power distribution in terms of your ability to plan, and "be planned for." But in his book *What is Sociology?* Elias talks about the "game models" — once you get beyond any kind of basic level of social complexity, no one is in total control. He shows how the number of social relationships or permutations expands rapidly once you go from two-person "games" to games with larger numbers of players. It then becomes much more difficult to control the actions of other players, as alliances form and change. Elias makes the point that even in the case of the French monarchies, when the King was technically all-powerful, he still could only survive in his position by playing off the nobility against the rising bourgeoisie. Although both Elias and Foucault reject the view of power as a property, I think figurational sociologists balk at the suggestion that power "does things," or that discipline deploys, organizes and subjects according to a plan, as if power and discipline have assumed the status of a human actor.

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