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# Reduction of Violence in the Course of Recent History Civilization Theory and Theory of Situational Logic in Comparison

Georg W. Oesterdiekhoff

Karlsruhe Institute for Technology, Karlsruhe, Germany

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Email: Oesterdiekhoff@t-online.de

**Abstract:** Ten years ago, Steven Pinker demonstrated on a broad empirical basis that in the course of the history of the last centuries violence has massively decreased in purely quantitative terms. He bases his explanation of this phenomenon on Norbert Elias' theory of civilization, which claims that humankind has developed an ever decreasing willingness to use violence due to psychogenetic development. In the background is the claim that pre-modern humankind was more violent because of its psychological stage of development. Here it is now shown that Elias had considerable difficulties in proving his theory. In fact, it seems that Elias was right in his thesis, but could not actually prove it. However, there are possibilities to prove his theory of the link between psychogenesis and violence empirically afterwards. For this purpose, however, it is necessary to switch from psychoanalysis to developmental psychology. Elias, in fact, had developed his theory of psychogenesis on the basis of psychoanalysis. Developmental psychology has been tested cross-culturally and has provided the relevant evidence. It is now indeed possible to prove that man has entered higher stages in the course of historical development. It is also possible to analyze historical examples of the use of violence in such a way that it becomes clear that Pinker and Elias were correct in their assumptions.

**Keywords:** Violence, Pacification, Psychological Stages, Cross-Cultural Psychology, Civilization Theory

## Introduction

The article deals with the history of violence over the past few centuries. Pinker (2011) has recently approved of the theory of Norbert Elias, (1976) according to it violence declined during the past centuries, during the transition from pre-modern to modern societies. Pinker supported by huge masses of empirical data what Elias himself had assumed and described on a comparably poor and problematic data basis. According to Elias, medieval society harbors more primitive and childlike human beings, emotional and impulsive types of humans, people with low thresholds of shame and embarrassment, with low self control and uncivilized manners. Therefore, they tend to be more aggressive and violent. However, Elias himself describes too that medieval society necessitates exerting more violence because there was no state to protect people. Further, the weak or missing state leaves more space to aggressive behavior to reach one's goals. Elias tries to evidence his psychogenetic assumptions by

ample descriptions of battles and duels and of violence against women. The problem is that against his own theory these descriptions cannot evidence his psychology of medieval humans as he has admitted that medieval social structures give much space to exert violence, much more than modern society usually does.

Interestingly, scholars belonging to the Elias tradition did not discover this huge gap in his theory (Rousseau and Verreycken 2021; Fletcher (2013); Gabriel and Mennell, 2011; Zabudovsky, 2008). Likewise Pinker (2011), who was most successful in delivering empirical data that evidence the decline of violence in history, did not recognize that he failed to verify the theory of psychogenesis. The reason to that failure is that these authors mentioned - and numerous else too - did not understand the theoretical structure of the civilization theory of Elias. Basically, they did not understand that according to Elias the primitive, childlike psyche is the cause to primitive behavior and especially to the high rates of violence. They implicitly assumed that the evidence of

more violent behavior in medieval society is in itself a product of primitive psyche and that decline of violence in recent centuries is in itself the evidence for psychogenetic maturation. Thus, they did not discriminate actual behavior from psychogenetic structures assuming that lower rates of violence inevitably give the proof of psychological maturation and advanced civilized behavior. Generally, they confused behavior and psyche, ignoring that the different social structures alone could account to the divergent rates of violence. The reason to that confusion is the ignorance of the multi-causal and problematic structure of Elias' theory and the weak interest into the theory of psychogenesis, the theory of the primitive human being. Many authors simply ignored Elias' theory of primitive man (Rousseau and Verreycken, 2021; Zabludovsky, 2008).

Rational Choice-authors could argue that the theory of psychogenetic development is superfluous to explain the history of violence. The link between weak state and high violence versus the link between strong state and low violence suffices to explain the decline of violence, rational choice or social structure - theoreticians could maintain (Otterbein and Otterbein, 1965).

The argumentation of the article describes these research gaps. Then it resorts to Piagetian psychology to base the theory of psychogenesis on those empirical and theoretical grounds Elias' theory simply did not have. According to the empirical findings of Piagetian cross-cultural psychology Hallpike (1979); Havighurst and Neugarten, 1955; Dasen, 1977; Freitag, (1983); adult humans from pre-modern societies (folk societies according to R. Redfield) do not develop the adolescent stage of formal operations. They only establish the preoperational or concrete-operational stages, that is the stages of the child, but differ from it by more knowledge and life experience. However, this discovery, won over the past 100 years by growing masses of data and theoretical reflections, confirms Elias' theory of psychogenesis. Piagetian psychology delivers the proof Elias did not find (Habermas, 1976; Dux, 2017; Oesterdiekhoff, 2000; Ziegler 1968). Some authors already tried to apply Piagetian psychology to Elias' theory that way (Oesterdiekhoff, 2011a; Weiler, 2011).

The argumentation of the article goes further. Elias' own descriptions of violence could not evidence whether these forms originated in the primitive psyche or not. It is not to clarify whether battles, described by Elias, originate in social structures only or more in the primitive psyche. However, there are historical patterns of violence - Elias overlooked - that are clearly born in the primitive psyche and not in social structures like the weak state. It is analyzed that the Roman arena games solely originated in the wishes of the common people, neither in slavery nor in any surmised public functions. They do not have the multi-causal origin violence in private situations or wars

may have, those examples Elias had used. The arena games evidence clearly that the ancient psyche tended more to cruelty, sadism and violence than the modern psyche does. The primitive psyche is the only cause to the existence of these games (Oesterdiekhoff, 2012a/1, 2012/2). It is then added that the analysis of the brutal-sadistic punishment law must come to the same conclusion. These considerations, however, can deliver that kind of clear proof of Elias' theory he himself did not put forward. Thus, both Piagetian theory and rightly chosen and rightly analyzed historical customs can verify Elias theory of civilization better than he had done by himself.

### *Reduction of Violence in Numbers*

The phenomenon of violence, especially physical violence, in history is described and discussed. In the foreground is the question why physical violence in pre-modern societies has been more pronounced in purely quantitative terms than in modern societies. There have always been social scientists who have been thinking they can deny this fact by referring to the world wars, the Holocaust and other phenomena (Duerr, 1988). But any social scientist familiar with quantitative data knows, or should know, that the phenomenon of physical violence is one that has actually been decreasing throughout history, especially in recent centuries and generations.

In the whole pre-modern world, about 1/3 of people came to death by their fellow species, but in Europe and North America during the whole 20th century, despite the wars, only 1% of people and after 1945 even only 1 per mille. Accordingly, the ratio between the industrial modern world of say the year 2000 on the one hand and the Stone Ages, Antiquity and Middle Ages added together on the other would be, on statistical average, 1 in 333. The few tribal societies that still survived in the 20th century, for example in Australia, Papua New Guinea, or the Amazon Basin, still had death tolls of 20 or 30% of the population (Keeley, 1996; Pinker, 2011).

In his book *Violence. A New History of Humankind*, Steven Pinker has spread out an extensive body of figures, taking into account all world regions and epochs, which also, in Pinker's view, puts beyond doubt that physical violence has to be considered as a continuously decreasing quantity in history. The figures Pinker presents show that in pre-state societies an average of 500 out of 100,000 people were murdered per year. Even the early states of antiquity lower these numbers considerably, to about 100 murders per year, calculated per 100,000 people. Among the Aztecs, however, the murder rate was still around 250 people (Pinker, 2011, p. 97).

### *Murder Rate in the Least Violent Non-State Societies Compared to State Societies*

In Europe around 1300, between 40 and 80 people were murdered per year for every 100,000 people,

depending on the nation. By 1600, this number had dropped to about 10 people in Germany, England and the Netherlands. In Italy and Scandinavia it had not dropped as much and was still around 50 people. By 1900, murder rates in England, Germany, the Netherlands, Italy and Scandinavia were hovering around 1 person and were already close to today's levels (Pinker, 2011, p. 111). Among industrialized countries, the United States has been among the most violent. In cities like Detroit, as many as 45 people out of 100,000 were murdered per year in the 1970s and 1980s (Pinker, 2011, p. 96). Today, some Central American countries are among the most violent countries on earth.

### *Norbert Elias' Theory of Civilization as Explanatory Model*

Pinker (2011, p. 107) claims that Norbert Elias's civilization theory is the only sociological theory capable of explaining this reduction in violence. I will briefly present the explanatory model developed by Elias. According to Elias (1976); historical development is the result of an interplay of sociogenetic and psychogenetic processes. Sociogenesis refers, among other things, to the evolution of state functions, including the greater presence of the judiciary and the police. Psychogenesis refers to the evolution of human beings from a primitive, childlike, passionate and aggressive type to a civilized, adult and more peaceful type - the latter having prevailed as a modal type only in recent centuries.

Accordingly, medieval societies are characterized by both weak state institutions and a primitive human type (Kaspersen (2021)). This gives rise to a double effect. Institutions capable of socializing high levels of civilization and peacefulness among people are too weakly developed. Humans remain at a primitive and child-like level and are therefore more prone to violence and passion. In this way, Elias combines, as it were, social theory, socialization theory and developmental psychology (Elias, 1976; Oesterdiekhoff, 2000).

The other effect, however, is more social structural. The weakness of the state provides more scope for violent action in order to assert one's own interests. Furthermore, people are more forced to rely on their own violent actions. Indeed, they have to defend themselves more, since a state that could protect them is insufficiently developed. Accordingly, Elias explains the higher rates of violence in the Middle Ages both sociogenetically and psychogenetically.

Elias's theory thus recognizes three causes for the greater violence of pre-modern and medieval societies. The first two causes are socio-structural and the third cause is psychological. This division into three is, of course, only an analytical differentiation. In historical reality, they form an amalgam:

- A weak state provides people with more opportunities to use violence (to enforce their interests)

- A weak state makes it necessary to exercise more violence (to protect oneself)
- A weak state and civilization cannot stimulate and force people to develop psychologically above a primitive level. Primitive people tend to act violently more often than more civilized people, no matter for what reasons and in what circumstances

The greater development of state functions in the course of modern times and modernity, on the other hand, limits the possibilities of being able to exercise violence. People can no longer exercise violence at their own discretion, since the modern state controls and punishes them more than before. Further, they no longer have to defend themselves against violent attacks, since the state protects them more effectively.

Elias, however, is not content with such a purely institutionalist explanation. Indeed, he contends that modern society socializes people to be more civilized and peaceful. Sociogenetic influences act on psychogenesis and raise people to a higher level of psychological development, which causes people to become less violent. As you can see, Elias explains the decline in violence in a similarly complex way, i.e., also through the interaction of psycho- and sociogenesis.

Accordingly, Elias also recognizes three causes for the reduction of violence since the onset of modern times. Two of them are of social-structural nature and one is of psychogenetic origin. Again, this threefold division is more analytical in nature:

- A strong state (police, judiciary) restricts the possibilities of individual violent action (in order to be able to enforce own interests)
- A strong state makes it unnecessary to use violence to protect oneself. It protects the citizens better than a weak state
- A strong state and a highly developed civilization have socialization contexts that stimulate and force people to develop psychologically. Psychologically more evolved people are more peaceful as a result of their inner nature, no matter what the circumstances

The question arises, however, whether Elias has succeeded in proving his theory. Could it not be that even if Elias was right in his theory, he still could not prove it? Is there not also the possibility of explaining the history of violence by simpler and more parsimonious means?

### *The Problem of the Three-Level Model of Civilization Theory*

Interestingly, even Elias's critics such as Hans-Peter Duerr, (1988); did not notice the tautological character of Elias's explanatory model. However, this tautological character has been demonstrated elsewhere (Oesterdiekhoff,

2000, pp. 174-183). Elias sees connections between the high propensity for violence in the Middle Ages and a primitive psyche and between the modern reduction of violence and a civilized psyche. His method, however, is based on interpretative attribution, on an interpolation of claimed psychological factors into the historical material. The problem with this is that - even according to Elias' own explanations - the different frequencies of violence could be explained even without psychogenesis. After all, Elias himself claims that correlations exist between a weak state and high levels of violence on the one hand and between a strong state and a reduction in violence on the other. But if this is so - and this correlation is very plausible - then one cannot without circumstance present the high propensity for violence of the Middle Ages as empirical evidence for the existence of a primitive psyche and the modern reduction of violence as empirical evidence for the development of a civilized psyche (Oesterdiekhoff, 2000, pp. 174-183, 285-291).

Elias uses a three-level model. He essentially explains the high propensity for violence in the Middle Ages as follows:

- Elias' thesis: Weak state > primitive psyche > high propensity for violence
- The problem with this is that his data basically only prove this correlation
- Weak state > high propensity for violence
- The same is true for the modern reduction of violence
- Elias' thesis: Strong state > civilized psyche > low propensity to violence
- Again, his data actually only prove
- Strong state > low propensity to violence

#### *The Alternative Rational Choice and Social-Structural Explanatory Model, Respectively*

A rational choice and purely social-structural theory could prove the psychogenetic theory of civilization to be both superfluous and unproven. It could claim that people always act in the same way in a willful, rational and purposeful manner and that differences measurable in terms of developmental psychology do not exist at all. Accordingly, the higher violence of the Middle Ages simply resulted from the absence or weakness of the state and police. For, stubborn and rational people take advantage of the opportunities that are offered to them if no one, i.e. not even the state, prevents them from doing so. Furthermore, they are forced to violent self-help if they are not protected by the state. Complementarily, the stronger modern state prevents private acts of violence. It restricts aggressive acts of violence and at the same time makes self-defense based on violence superfluous. Since many sociologists today do not know any other than social-structural and rational choice explanations, they probably tend not only to be satisfied with such types of explanations, but also to be sure that the

developmental-psychological type of explanation is thereby refuted per se. Rational Choice theory, situation logic and institutionalism often dominate the thinking even of those who do not count themselves as adherents of these constructs Coleman, (1990) as a typical representative of rational choice theory).

Accordingly, there exist theories that have proven of the link between non-state ethnicities and their high violence rates, in sharp difference to the link between state societies and their lower levels of violence. These theories do not mention or earmark psychogenetic factors. Besides, they do not expressively exclude them. However, these social-structural theories imply the assumption that other than institutional factors might be superfluous Otterbein and Otterbein, 1965; Keeley, (1996).

Interestingly, even authors belonging to the school of Elias solely earmark the sociogenetic factors and totally neglect the underlying psychogenetic factors concerning the history of violence. They understand Elias only partially and insufficiently, assuming that the reduction of violence be the psychogenetic phenomenon in itself – and not its outcome only. They implicitly take the sociogenetic factor as the causer and regard the reduction of violence as the civilized behavior by itself, as the psychogenetic phenomenon in nature. In fact, these authors do not discriminate from the rational choice or social-structural theoreticians because they have not understood that Elias' theory combines three factors. They have not understood that psychogenesis means psychological development from childhood to adulthood, as link between psyche and behavior and as link between society, psyche and behavior. They have totally overlooked that Elias maintains that the primitive psyche is the causer to high violence and the civilized psyche is the origin of peaceful behavior. They only see the link between social structures and behavior, the link between sociogenesis and behavior, wrongly assuming that the low level of violence be the civilized psyche by itself. They have ignored that Elias applies a three-dimensional theory with the ingredients: Institutions, psyche and behavior. Instead they only see institutions and behavior, such as traditional sociology or rational choice theory has done. They miss the kernel of Elias theoretical approach. Accordingly, they could not even see that Elias has not proven his theory of psychogenetic development because they didn't even recognize that Elias had referred to a theory of psychological development. They only focused the relationship between violence and social structures, totally ignoring different psychological stages as mediating factors (Zabludovsky, 2008); Fletcher, 2013; Rousseau and Verreycken, 2021). The following table shows some correlations between different types of society on the one side and the amount of homicide on the other side.

**Table 1:** Violence in different types of societies (numbers of homicide per 100.000 people per year)

Non-state nations	Inuit, Canadian Arctic	100
	!Kung, South Africa, before state control	42
	!Kung, South Africa, after state control	28
	Semai, Malaysia	30
State nations	The ten biggest US-American cities, 1990	45
	U.S.A. during the 1970's	10
	U.S.A. 2005	6
	Western Europe, late 20.th century	1

*Empirical Evidence of the Psychogenetic Development of Violence Within the Framework of the Structural-Genetic Theory Programme*

However, matters are far more complicated. Indeed, the lack of evidence for Elias's theory does not at all automatically imply the strength of evidence for rational choice theory and situational logic theory. In the following, I show that a social structure analysis of violent behavior based on rational choice theory is wrong and that Elias was right albeit he himself could not prove his theory with the facts he put forward. For this purpose it is necessary to bring examples of violent actions which have a direct origin in the primitive psyche and which therefore cannot be explained by social structure or/and rational choice theory. Thus, one needs historical examples that can be explained in one-dimensional psychological terms rather than in three-dimensional terms. Elias, in his book, did not put forward these pure phenomena - born in psychogenesis only - but only such examples (battles, duels) that can be explained also in terms of institutions or social structure. Thus, Elias' descriptions were insufficient and superficial and he did not find such data and phenomena that are capable to evidence the mere psychological origins of ancient violence behavior. Elias' simple descriptions of medieval battles could not prove of the greater cruelty and primitiveness of medieval man as he really believed and suggested.

The Roman arena games - Elias overlooked - are one of several examples that fall precisely into this grid. These games cannot be explained without the assumption of being phenomena born in a primitive psyche only. They cannot be explained solely in terms of social opportunities and requirements as wars and battles do - those examples that Elias had used. The arena games are composed of deadly duels, animal chases and punitive executions, often carried out in the most gruesome manner Baker (2004); Friedländer (1957). However, these three elements are also found in the other pre-modern societies of the Americas, Asia, Africa and Europe. Lethal duels in front of larger audiences are found around the globe in all pre-modern societies and in Europe into modern times. Criminal executions as folk festivals can be found around the globe in all pre-modern societies since the earliest times, in Europe until modern times. The same is true of animal chases in front of a larger audience. However, it

cannot be excluded that these three elements were nevertheless already weaker in their execution in Europe around 1500 than in the Roman Empire, in terms of the extent of cruelty, passion, lack of empathy and so on. It is questionable whether Europeans were still so primitive around 1500 that they could still have performed the Roman arena games. One might assume that in this respect Europe of the year 1500 was already more civilized than the Roman Empire, even if one still encountered the three elements, though exercised in a less splendid way in comparison. But it can only be a matter of more or less minor differences in degree anyway - the insignificance of the differences, should they exist at all, is ultimately proven by the presence of the three elements around 1500. An average European of the year 1500 would probably still have been able to attend the Roman arena games, but a European of the year 2000 would not be psychologically able to do so. Ludwig Friedländer (1957); in 1859 and Charles Darwin, (2009); in 1872 judged, the simple European people of their time would not be able to tolerate the arena games anymore, because they were more civilized than the ancient people of the Roman time. If this difference could be recognized in such a way already in the middle of the 19th century, then the judgment of the two experts applies today with far greater justification. In any case, the arena games represent the developmental level of empathy, violence, cruelty and emotionality, i.e., the psychological developmental level of pre-modern people in general, not only that of ancient Mediterranean people (Oesterdiekhoff, 2012b/2, 2012/1, pp. 369-434, 2013, pp. 495-523).

The arena games did not originate in social structural conditions and functions (nor in slavery, as some have claimed) (Baker, 2004). The arena games were conducted for their entertainment value. The people enjoyed the cruel performances and demanded that they be performed. The primitive psyche is therefore the sole cause of their existence. There is no nation today in which the performance of these games would be possible, because they are incongruous with the psychological stage and the moral standards growing out of it, which characterize the thinking and psyche of nations today. The arena games alone prove that the social, moral and emotional thinking and feeling of pre-modern cultures were rooted in more primitive strata. Only peoples at more primitive psychological levels than those that structure contemporary nations are capable of conducting the games (Oesterdiekhoff, 2013; 2016, 2012/2).

Thus, the analysis of arena games provides the evidence that Elias did not find. His examples of violence stem from a mixture of actual social structural and merely imputed psychogenetic factors. The arena games, on the other hand, have no social-structural causes at all, but exclusively psychogenetic ones. And so they prove that pre-modern people were more primitive and therefore more cruel than modern people. Therefore, they prove that Elias's theory of civilization is verifiable with respect to its psychogenetic claims, no doubt also in view of his historical examples and expositions. Elias himself did not bring such a clear piece of evidence for his own theory.

However, there are other historical examples that fall into the same pattern. The arena games already shed light on how one must also assess the brutal-sadistic corporal punishment of the pre-modern world. Primitive peoples as well as ancient and medieval civilizations used corporal punishment and brutal executions in a similar way to punish delinquents in the harshest possible way, often even for minor acts. This criminal law has been successively abolished first in Europe since 1700 and worldwide since the colonial era over the last 150 years (Seagle, 1946; Schild, 1980; Pinker, 2011). It is utterly at odds with the moral standards of contemporary modern nations. Likewise, archaic criminal law does not result from social structural conditions and institutional requirements, but solely from the primitive stage of development (Oesterdiekhoff, 2013, pp. 363-390, 2014).

Steven Pinker argues that the decline in violence against children and women is equally the result of the process of civilization. Similarly, the development of animal welfare since the Age of Enlightenment can also be seen. Of course, these considerations also shed light on the phenomenon of cannibalism, which was widespread in archaic cultures, on duel culture and on slavery and lawlessness, as well as on the phenomenon of human sacrifice. These phenomena have disappeared in modern societies because they are incongruent with the scope of acceptance of the higher levels of psychological development (Pinker, 2011; Rüsen, 2020; Steinmetz, 1929).

The phenomena of violence that are directly related to psychogenetic stages and that cannot be explained in terms of social structure and rational choice theory prove that Elias and Pinker were correct in their central assumptions. In this way, it can be demonstrated retrospectively that the connection between different frequencies of violence and social structures described by Elias is indeed not only caused by social structures and situational logic, but must also be explained by the interplay of sociogenesis and psychogenesis. Thus, the theory of civilization can actually be verified retrospectively with regard to these basic questions.

### *Theory of Psychogenesis According to the Civilization Theory of N. Elias*

Elias never developed a systematic theory of psychogenesis. The closest that can be seen as an attempt to present a theory of primitive man and a theory of civilized man (a theory of the psychogenetic development of humankind) are the remarks at the end of the second volume of *Über den Prozess der Zivilisation*. Elias (1976, vol. 2, p. 391, vol. 1, pp. 330, 173-174, 191-192, 250) draws on the so-called structural model of personality developed by Sigmund Freud. The ID describes drives and emotions, the EGO the mental and acting dimension of the human being and the SUPER-EGO conscience and morality. According to Freud, these three elements constitute the human person in its entirety. Freud now describes the development of the human being from child to adult on the basis of this structural model. In the child, the ID is strong and the EGO and SUPER-EGO are weak. In the modern adult, however, the three parts are balanced. EGO and SUPER-EGO are strong and control the ID. Freud himself already and later especially Elias claim that the personality of the archaic adult has the peculiarities that the structural model describes with regard to children. Freud and Elias assert these parallels between the two groups of people on the basis of the structural model thus historically dynamized. Both groups of people, according to Elias in particular, act passionately, violently, emotionally, think short-term, egocentrically and simply, have low self-control and have low thresholds of shame and embarrassment. Somehow, medieval people stop at the level of children. However, Elias formulates these parallels superficially and in later publications he sometimes even claims that he never asserted the existence of these parallels (Oesterdiekhoff, 2000, pp. 135-147).

From a certain point of view, it is nevertheless a strong approach. For Elias does not, nolens volens, merely claim that children and medieval people share intelligence or ways of thinking. Indeed, by relying on the structural model, the parallels extend to the whole of human nature, to the center of personality and thus to the "whole human." By using the structural model, he asserts, at least implicitly ("implicitly" meaning: with a view to possible limits of understanding what he writes and asserts), that children and medieval people share their whole being and core structures (Elias, 1976, vol. 1, p. 263). As already said, he never really became aware of the consequences of his own approach (see more precisely Oesterdiekhoff, 2000, pp. 156, 183 - 189).

How then does Elias prove the childlike nature of medieval man? His main support is indeed the violence theme. But that his descriptions of violence do not contain a trace of proof has already been shown above. What else does he provide? He describes how medieval people eat without knives and forks, how they leave winds and blow their nose, how they lack manners in all areas. He

describes the publicity of the wedding night, the lack of inhibition in dealing with prostitutes and the shared beds in the inns. He actually believes to have found in these descriptions evidence that people were psychogenetically less developed than today's people, respectively, were somehow big children (Elias, 1976, Vol. 2).

The last representative of classical sociology received approval with this form of evidence by a large part of international sociology. Often the actual implications and foundations of his psychogenetic approach were not understood at all (Gabriel and Mennell 2011; Salumets, 2002; Zabudovsky, 2008). In any case, in general, the lack of evidence of the civilization theory did not strike anyone. Even his harshest critics, such as Duerr (1988), did not understand the empirical weakness of civilization theory (Oesterdiekhoff, 2000, pp. 192-196). Many thought that Elias had actually been able to prove his theory of psychogenesis well (see evidence in Oesterdiekhoff, 2000, pp. 49-79). No one realized that Elias had not presented a trace of evidence for the filial nature of medieval man and thus not a trace of evidence for psychogenetic civilization.

For, if medieval people, like children, eat with their fingers, have no problem with their nakedness and see no embarrassment in picking their noses in public, then examples of this kind prove neither the childishness of children nor that of medieval adults. Why not? Because children, like medieval adults, can be taught not to engage in these behaviors through socialization, practice and method and can be taught over a period of time not too long to eat with a knife and fork and to use a handkerchief to blow their nose. So these behaviors are simply unsuitable as measuring instruments of developmental stages. If they were suitable, it would imply that children could become adults within months and medieval people could become modern adults within a short time. However, if this were possible, then educators and parents as well as child psychologists would certainly have noticed this. One could then go back to the time before J.-J. Rousseau, when even intellectuals were unaware of the differences between children and adults.

Elias, his students and his critics failed to grasp the logic of this destructive reasoning in more than 50 years. They really have believed that Elias had demonstrated his theory of psychogenesis basing on such descriptions. That again shows that they did not understand the core phenomenon of psychogenesis and what is required to combine data and theory with reference to the phenomenon of psychological development. They did not understand the specifics and characteristics of the psychological development from children to adults. Modern developmental psychology does not resort to such descriptions of manners when describing ontogenetic development. It resorts to more sophisticated standards concerning the choice of empirical tests valid to

display different psychological stages (Oesterdiekhoff, 2000, pp. 155-189).

### *Structural-Genetic Theory Programme as Follower of the Civilization Theory*

If one wants to save the historically dynamized structural model, the concept of psychogenesis and the theory of civilization, then one must leave these worlds of thought and enter more advanced standards. It is not only possible, but has long been realized, namely to prove that archaic or medieval adults are psychologically on the level of children. Child and developmental psychology - in contrast to the psychogenesis concept of Elias - has hard empirical indicators that can measure and prove childlike stages. According to Jean Piaget's theory, human development occurs in four stages: sensorimotor (0 - 1;6 years), preoperational (1;6 - 8 years), concrete-operational (6 - 10 years) and formal-operational stages (11 - 20 years). Piagetian Cross-Cultural Psychology has shown from 1930 to the present that adults from so-called folk societies (R. Redfield) - developing regions, pre-modern cultures and tribal societies - do not develop the fourth stage, but stop predominantly at the pre-operational and sometimes at the concrete-operational stage. Thus, they do not develop stage-structurally any further than children of the fifth, seventh, or tenth year (depending on the culture), even though they gain more knowledge and experience than children of these ages. All tests measuring the developmental level of logical, physical, social, moral, religious, political, or moral reasoning have shown that archaic adults respond and react in the same way as children of the above stages (Luria, 1982; Dasen, 1977; Hallpike, 1979; Havighurst and Neugarten, 1955; Kälble, 1997; Freitag (1983).

Children and archaic adults therefore consider winds, clouds, rocks and waters to be animate and thinking living beings. They believe that the environment, nature and reality are aware of exactly what is happening in the world and react magically to what is happening. Both groups believe in ghosts, witches and wizards. Both groups believe in magic, that people and things can have a direct influence on events, through wishes, rites and spells. Both groups believe that cats can turn into dogs, people into animals and rocks into spirits. Both groups believe in oracles that allow one to ask the world what has happened in the past and what will happen in the future. Both groups have no understanding of chance and probability. Both groups favor harsh punishments, tend to ignore intentions in sentencing and have a sacred understanding of rules that they do not implement very well in practice. Both groups believe dreams involve perceptions of actual events or soul journeys to distant places, so do not grasp the unreal and purely subjective nature of dreams. Both groups have a spiritualistic understanding of things and a materialistic understanding of ideas - so they cannot draw the line between subjective and objective. Therefore, they

do not distinguish well between perceptions and ideas and are regular eidetics. Both groups do not understand hypothetical-deductive reasoning. The list of parallels could be continued across logical, physical, political, religious, moral and social thought and therefore indefinitely (Hallpike, 1979; Werner, 1948; Oesterdiekhoff, 2011b; 2012; 2013; 2021).

On this basis, the differences between archaic and modern adults can be described. Only on this basis can one formulate a historical anthropology, history of mentalities and general micro-sociology. Thus, the differences between archaic and modern people are much greater than social sciences have assumed so far. Only when one knows the psychology of archaic man in detail, one can understand the peculiarities of pre-modern societies and the peculiarities of modern society. Only then can one understand long-term social change from the basics.

Knowledge of the psychogenesis of humankind provides the key to understanding the history of worldview, science, philosophy, religion, law, morality, politics, art and literature. Pre-modern cultures have a magical-animistic worldview; modern industrial societies are characterized by a physical and empirical-causal worldview. The transformations in the minds of populations over the centuries explain this change. The psychogenesis from the preoperational to the formal-operational stages explains this transformation. The emergence of formal operations in the minds of the intellectual elite explains the emergence of the natural sciences.

Psychogenesis also explains the transformations in the history of religion. Children see their parents as magicians and as gods until the age of six. Similarly, archaic humanity worshipped their dead (that is their parents and grand-parents) as gods, prayed to them and sacrificed to them. Children see clouds, winds, mountains, waters and forests as thinking beings. Thus, it can be explained that archaic adults worshipped these natural phenomena as gods. The demise of ancestor worship and nature religion can thus be explained in terms of developmental psychology.

Young children demand harsh punishments, older children chose and support appropriate and humane punishments. The history of criminal law has followed the same path, towards humane criminal law, especially in the period after 1700. Children like to decide on the basis of lots and hazard games, pre-modern cultures regularly on the basis of ordeals. Children have difficulty judging intentions with certainty (objective responsibility), the same phenomenon is known in legal history as *Erfolgshaftung*. People are condemned for things for which they cannot be held responsible at all, at least not according to a modern understanding.

Ancient and medieval painting is based on that understanding of space, which can also be observed in children up to the age of nine. The surface is structured two-dimensionally and has no perspective representation.

The proportions and distances are not correct. One paints against what one knows of an object. No ancient or medieval painter ever painted a picture of how things appear from a given point of view alone. No oblique views and no foreshortenings are painted, no light and no shadow. These features are, without exception, manifestations of the preoperational stage of thinking, especially the preoperational understanding of space. It is only since the Italian Renaissance around 1400 that painters develop the stage of concrete operations. And now the tremendous creative power associated with the painting of the modern era sets in. No painting from antiquity and the Middle Ages comes close to the qualities of the paintings of the new epoch. This transformation is not founded in the evolution of styles and techniques simply, but is reducible to the development of psychological stages.

It can be seen that the history of society and culture can be explained only on the basis of the psychological stage theory. It is not another theory which throws one or another light on the phenomena. Rather, it is the first theory in the history of science that explains the states of law, science, worldview, philosophy, religion, morality and art from the foundations as they were given in ancient and pre-modern societies. It explains their further development and, above all, the new structures that these phenomena exhibit when they enter the epoch of modern times and modernity. Therefore, without psychological stage theory there is no scientific theory of the historical development of society and culture (Gablik, 1976; Dux, 2017; Habermas, 1976; Kälble, 1997; Hallpike, 1979; Oesterdiekhoff, 2011a; 2012; 2013; 2021).

## Results

One can better assess the relationship between Norbert Elias' civilization theory and the structural-genetic theory programme Oesterdiekhoff (2011b)/1, 2011/2, 2013, 2012/1, 2021) on this basis. The civilization theory of Elias (and perhaps the sociology of Auguste Comte) were the only classical sociologies that had the right starting points and foundations. For, the civilization theory had an understanding of archaic man and thus an understanding of the psychogenetic development of mankind. It had a theory that linked sociogenesis and psychogenesis. Equipped with these foundations, it was far ahead of other classical sociologies in crucial and fundamental aspects. The structural-genetic theory programme shares exactly these presuppositions of the civilization theory. The difference, however, is the following: Elias' theory of archaic man is factually correct, but he could not prove it. The structural-genetic theory programme can not only prove Elias' theory of psychogenesis, but replaces it. Namely, the developmental-psychological description of archaic man is theoretically and empirically superior to Elias' description.



## Discussion

It follows that Elias did not, nor could he, make any really fundamental contributions to the reconstruction of the history of the major spheres of culture, because his psychological theory was not suitable for this purpose. He describes the emergence of the state, the modern understanding of time, mores, gender relations, violence and manners. But he does not describe the historical development of science, philosophy, religion, art, morality and law, certainly not on the strict basis of the theory of psychogenesis. Nor would he have had the theoretical means and instruments available with the tools of his Freudian concept of psychogenesis. His concept of psychogenesis did not have the key to reconstruct the historical development of these cultural areas from their archaic initial states to the modern highly developed structures. Thus, even if he had tried to reconstruct these cultural areas in terms of developmental psychology, he would have failed with the means at his disposal. It is clear, however, what Elias ultimately aimed at was the structural-genetic theoretical programme. He shares this goal with Comte, Weber, Habermas, Wundt and many others.

## Conclusion

The structural-genetic theory programme shares with Elias' theory of civilization the view that archaic man has a child nature. Elias explains the violence of the Middle Ages against the fact of the primitive psyche of man. In this respect, the structural-genetic theory programme is liable to share Elias' view. If archaic man is at a childlike stage of psychological development, then he must tend to be more violent (Oesterdiekhoff, 2012a/2, 2016).

Children are definitely more violent than adolescents and adults. As children and adolescents get older, their violence decreases. Three-year-olds are particularly violent, but children below the age of 12 in general tend to push, shove, hit and fight Côté *et al.* (2006; Pinker, 2011; Oesterdiekhoff, 2000, pp. 285-314, 2013, pp. 495-522). Their verbal aggressiveness is also greater than that of adults. Already the whole first decade of life knows a continuous decrease in physical violence and this trend continues steadily in the second decade of life. The adult of modern societies does not practice physical violence anymore.

In pre-modern societies, however, adults are actually more violent. Duels are highly valued. They increase a man's prestige. Duels are very common among primitive peoples and also in medieval societies. The examples shown above: Arena games, criminal law and violence against women and children exhibit even more how violence permeates pre-modern societies.

It is clear that the high propensity for violence in pre-modern societies is not simply and exclusively psychogenetic. Many causes play into it, as the opening

chapters have also made clear. Different social structures (police, judiciary) and political orders (territorial state versus tribal culture without a fixed territory) as well as conditioning (according to Skinner and Bandura) also play a major role. But arena games and criminal law are exclusively psychogenetic and not at all caused by social structures. This then also throws light on the fact that there must inevitably be a causal connection between primitive psyche on the one hand and violence against women and children as well as duel and warrior culture on the other hand.

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The author declares to have checked the research literature and data cited carefully.

## Ethics

I declare that the content of the article does not violate any ethical standards concerning the rights of people.

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