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Daniel 2002). Carter claims that other social structure categories such as gender, ethnicity, and class differ from “race,” but he insufficiently delves into the passing comparisons. His insistence on the dualistic use of agency-structure is provocative but he could have elaborated it further. All in all, *Realism and Racism*, although a frustrating read because of the way the material is organized and presented, raises some provocative issues and adds, however problematically, to an important ongoing debate.

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The Society of Individuals, by **Norbert Elias**. Edited by **Michael Schröter**. Translated by **Edmund Jephcott**. New York: Continuum, 2001. 247 pp. \$21.95 paper. ISBN: 0-8264-1372-2.

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The Society of Individuals lays down the intellectual framework underlying Norbert Elias' great empirical study of the *Civilizing Process*. The book is made up of three distinct essays written in three different historical contexts. “The Society of Individuals” was originally part of the theoretical conclusion of Elias' sociohistorical masterpiece published just before World War II, but was not finally printed until 1983. “Problems of Self-Consciousness and the Image of Man” was written in the 1940s and 1950s. “Changes in the We-I Balance” was written in 1986 for the publication of the present book. Put together, the three texts offer an outstanding insight into the progress of Elias' social and historical thought.

The text still sounds so relevant today that it is hard to realize the first essay was written as early as 1939. In it Elias intends to challenge the common-sense opposition between “individual” and “society,” that has

served as a conceptual basis for the methodological antagonism between “individualistic” and “holistic” schools in sociology—a debate polluted by political and moral stands, respectively valuing (and substantializing) either society or the individual, reducing the other term to a secondary status, either as an abstraction, or as a mere illusion. To “break through the either/or” alternative and “melt the frozen antithesis,” Elias proposes to show how individual and social facts do not exist as two different things that could be studied separately by social scientists, but correspond to two sides of the same complex reality.

Individuals prior to socialization and independent from social relationships, says Elias, would not be much more than undifferentiated animals devoid of personality. He notices that “culture” or “society” is not so much a principle of uniformity and conformity than it is the motor of individual differentiation and distinction. In modern society people just have to be individuals. Relatedness is no more thought of as an individual's accidental property, but as the very condition of individuality understood as social differentiation from the others. Moreover, in order to become an adult a child must incorporate the rules of self-restraint and more generally, pass through the successive phases of the process of civilization, until reaching that which is appropriate to his or her society. The vision can be called “evolutionist” indeed, but of a very particular kind: Elias' is an antipsychological evolutionism, reversing the Freudian relationship between ontogeny and phylogeny.

From this vision of a universal human interdependence, Elias draws a theory of power, no longer understood as a magical force originating in individuals, but as a specific inequality of dependence: A's power on B stems from B being more dependent on A than A on B for the satisfaction of standard social requirements. Power becomes an “especially large social opportunity to influence the self-regulation and fate of other people.” Replace A and B by more concrete social groups monopolizing the means of violence or by different groups of economic specialists, you get a totalizing and particularly enlightening overview of the functioning of human societies, and of the endogenous tensions that produce social and historical change, “without any external dri-

ving forces being involved." What first appeared as a tension between individual and society then turns out to be a historical tension within society itself: a tension between on the one hand the inner individual consciousness stemming from growing social complexity, and on the other the restriction to this very capacity for personal blossoming by the requirements of self-constraint and functional specialization that necessarily go with that novel complexity.

Not content with deconstructing the "frozen antithesis" between the "individual" conceived as a free interiority and "society" seen as system of reifying external forces, Elias applies himself to the task of reconstructing the genesis of the theoretical and cognitive opposition, grounding it in the historical transformations of social interdependence and individual self-consciousness throughout the successive phases of the process of civilization. His theoretical framework is dynamic: individuals and groups are not given once and for all, but change and evolve with the network of relations that produce their social existence. In a logic of circular reinforcement, individual self-control progresses along with social control (the monopolizing of violence by the State), and both evolve in accordance with the advances in the control of humanity as a whole on "nature." Relations of humankind to nature, of men to men, and of self to self, turn out to be three interconnected aspects of one single process of civilization.

Then, reconsidering the classical problems of the philosophy of knowledge in the light of this new theoretical program, Elias manages to retrace Cartesian dualism of body and soul to the specific phase of the history of self-restraint that reached certain classes at the time Descartes wrote his *Meditations*. Indeed, the seventeenth century had seen the emergence of the consciousness of an "I" separated both from the "we" of the community and from the physical world of phenomena, including the subject's own body.

Studying the historical changes in the "we-I" balance, Elias then draws a sociology of subjective identifications, linking them to the evolution of objective interdependence between social functions. Moreover, he highlights the paradoxical part played by the modern nation-State, tangentially leveling individual differences, but at the same time

contributing to mass individualization (mainly by addressing abstract separate individuals independent from any group participation). Finally, his analysis of the national state, an antidote to the common confusion of the "universal" with the "national" in European social theory, leads to sketches of a sociology of globalization and of the contemporary shift of old states toward supranational levels of integration. Elias demonstrates how several collectives can be competing for the monopoly of the legitimate definition of the "we" (and of the corresponding control of legitimate violence). He also shows, perhaps less convincingly, that subjective consciousness and identification embodied in "social habitus" can often lag behind compared to the real advances in the interdependence between individuals, nations, and continents.

To account fully for the importance of Norbert Elias' work, maybe we should be reminded that the historically located opposition between "individual" and "society" still haunts many contemporary scientific studies. Some of the key notions of standard sociology, such as the inescapable "structure-agency" theoretical couple, still rest on such a sterilizing dualism. It is thus no exaggeration to say that Elias, engaging in rigorous historical and genetic work on the very categories used by his own discipline, had already paved the way a long time ago for a genuinely reflexive sociology.

The Consumption of Mass, edited by **Nick Lee** and **Rolland Munro**. Oxford, UK; Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2001. 234 pp. \$34.95 paper. ISBN: 0-631-22819-5.

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There have been serious scholarly efforts of late to make sense of sociological terms such as "mass culture," "popular culture," and "consumption." To some extent such operative phrases have been used as so many interchangeable parts; rootless terms open to any definition as may conveniently suit the investigative paradigm at hand. Indeed, the lack of foundational research in the area of what is truly meant by "mass" has invited such wide-ranging, and too often unscholarly, employment of the notion. Still, mass as a sociological