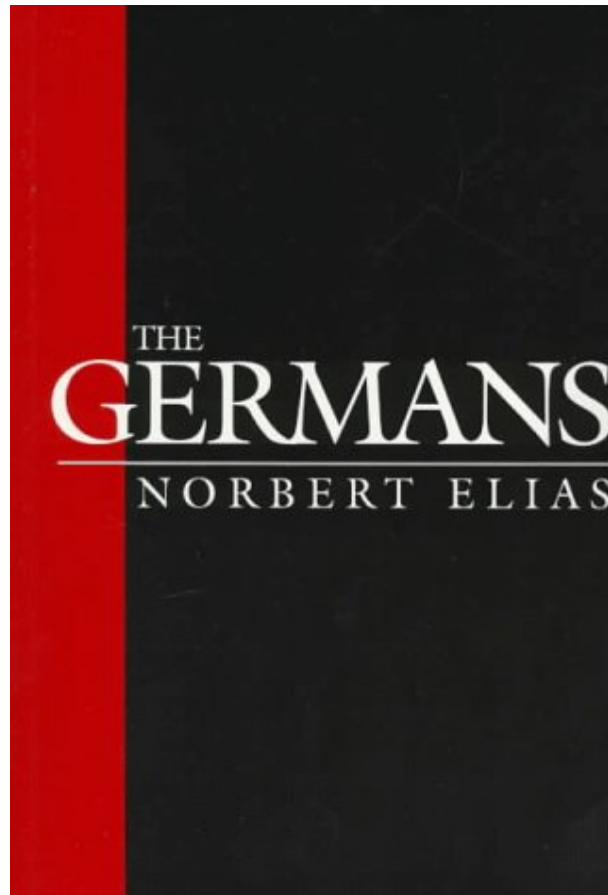
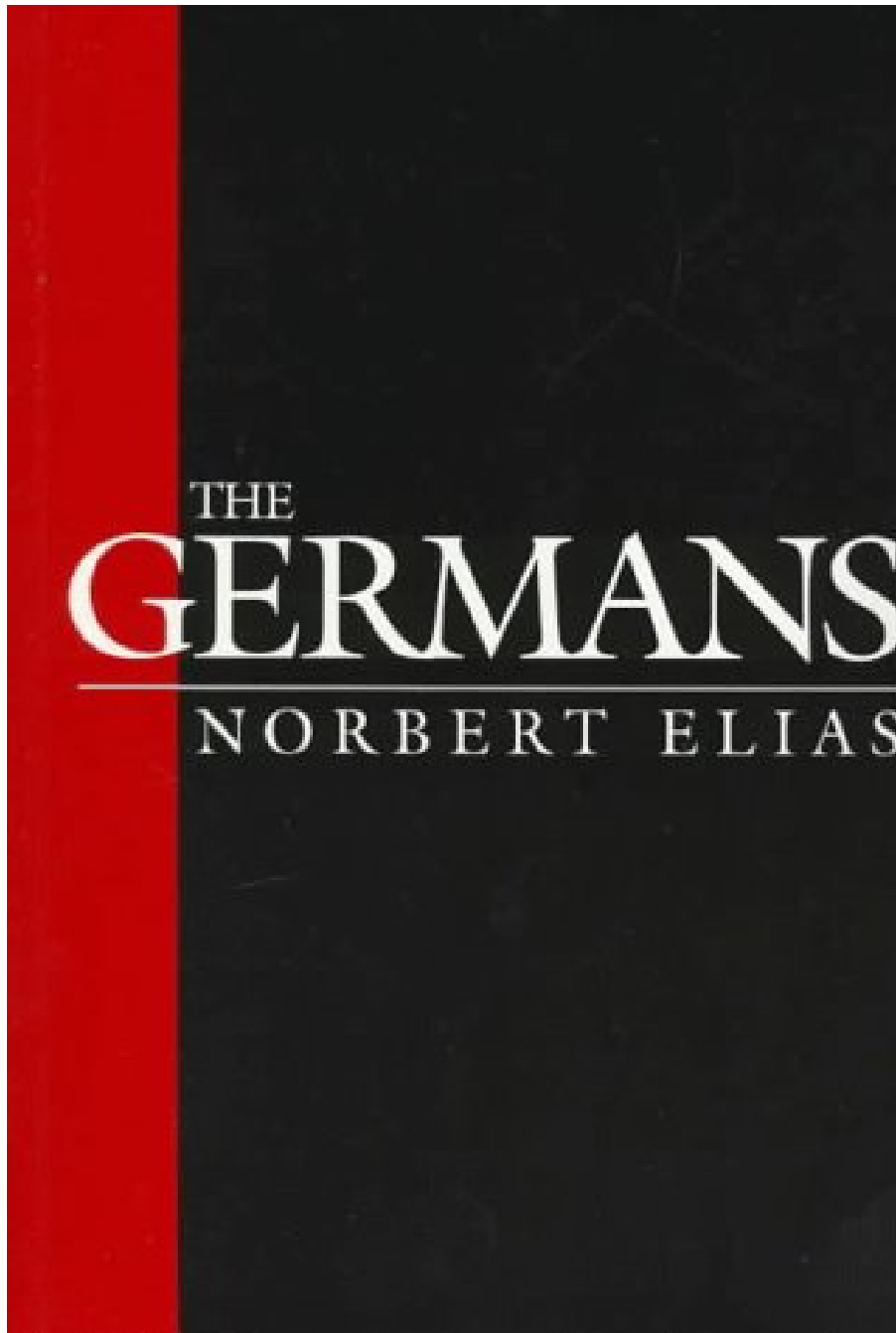


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Noted German sociologist Elias (*The Civilizing Process*, Blackwell, 1994) presents here a series of lectures and essays focusing on German social development since the Enlightenment. He emphasizes the ways in which the features of German life that combined to produce Adolf Hitler and National Socialism grew out of German history. Elias argues that the Second Empire was organized around a code of honor based on dueling or its possibility. This point is overstated; he makes a more convincing case for the flourishing in Weimar of a climate of brutal violence that denied the legitimacy of a parliamentary republic and challenged the effective monopoly of deadly force necessary to the state's functioning. Traces of this "habitus," according to Elias, still remain part of the German mentality?a sobering concept, particularly in light of Daniel J. Goldhagen's *Hitler's Willing Executioner's* (LJ 3/15/96). For academic collections.?Dennis E. Showalter, Colorado Coll., Colorado Springs

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Review

Elias's magnum opus . . . Having read it, no one will say again that the awkward gap between the 'bird's eye view' and the insider's experience of society cannot be bridged, that the tortured ways of history cannot be both explained and understood. -- Zygmunt Bauman author of *Modernity and the Holocaust*

This insightful work . . . has much to say about Germany. But it also has much to point out about other nations, especially the emerging democracies of central and eastern Europe, which have a lot to learn about nation-building. -- *Christian Science Monitor*

This study is particularly brilliant, even for the great Elias. In it he returns to the shame analysis that he began in *The Civilizing Process*, clarifying great swaths of German and European cultural history. A must for your reading list. -- Thomas J. Scheff University of California, Santa Barbara

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A Classic one

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Norbert Elias gives us with this fantastic piece of work the BEST interpretation on the question of nationalism(s). His text is so clear and yet so full of ideas that it keeps you reading until the very end. And it is not a very "friendly" theme. This one is for anybody who ever asked how and why nationalism works as a powerful bond and wonders about the development of ideas in Germany until World War II. Definitely, a masterpiece

4 of 5 people found the following review helpful.

A historic masterpiece

By Rudolf Stiegelmeyr

Norbert Elias provides third and fourth postwar generations with a masterful insight into not only how nationalism together with authoritarian thinking work but how and why their particular German version could develop in the first place. Without knowing and understanding this, understanding the mechanisms of the Third Reich and - even more important - why their roots are still there is simply not possible. Learning from history with regard to these underlying sub-cultures from which Nazi ideologies drew their powerful and deadly potential and on the other hand their misinterpretation by the rest of the world means reading Elias' "The Germans". He clearly shows: the roots for Nazism and Nazism lie much deeper than World Depression's unemployment, the Spirits of Verdun or Hitler's brilliant demagoguism.

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Understand Terrorists because of a German Jew With a Front Row Seat to History's Anomaly: The Nazis

By Charlotte A. Hu

Norbert Elias was a German Jew who watched as neighbors and friends slowly distanced themselves as a result of the Nazi German propaganda and then slowly, quietly turned a blind eye as people they went to elementary school with were slaughtered. He has a unique perspective from which to study sociology and his findings are stunning. I've always wondered why he wasn't more famous. Not only did he have a front row seat to one of the most baffling periods of human history, his systematic, scientific analysis of those events is powerful.

Among other observations, he notes that it is only between groups that the most horrific acts of human behavior are possible. If we consider another human to be "just like us," we are incapable of committing acts much worse than cutting them off in traffic. It is only when we define another group as "other," that we humans can kill or worse.

Looking back on human history from the way U.S. troops slowly developed ways of referring to Japanese soldiers in WWII or to the Vietnamese as Gooks, which I've always suspected was a spinoff from the Korean War and the Korean word guk, which means country, but is used so frequently that it may have been what stood out for American soldiers serving there. Is he miguksaram? or hanguk samaram? He is hanguk samaram. After hearing a few exchanges, I can imagine a comic says okay, they are all guk. And these soldiers went on to serve in Vietnam where the term was broadened from Korean to any Asian. Of course, it was in Vietnam where the very fabric of American morals was tested because teen and even pre-teen children carried guns and bombs and would kill just as quickly as adults, so powerfully puritanical Americans had to break their own ideals and kill children to survive. To do this, to live, they had to dehumanize the enemy. After all, if that kid were just like a son or a neighbor's son, how could a good "God-fearing" Texas or Kansas farm boy take a bead on him? He couldn't.

And even as I watch the news today from ISIS and other terrorists of the Middle East to the people committing hate crimes against Arab-Americans in the US, Norbert Elias rings in my ears. It is only between groups that truly horrible actions are possible. Norbert is a remarkable insightful sociologist who has written a universally penetrating work about human behavior.

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