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THE ARENA GAMES IN THE ROMAN EMPIRE: A CONTRIBUTION TO THE EXPLANATION OF THE HISTORY OF MORALS AND HUMANITY

*The main attractiveness of the games was lying in their
horrific character. The pleasure of the Romans into this
kind of sports was tremendously brutal and perverse
(Grant 1982:91, transl. by G. O.).*

Roman arena games essentially consisted of gladiator fights on life or death, cruel executions of delinquents, and chases with wild animals. Millions of humans and millions of animals were killed in the arenas during the Imperial period. This article shows that the mentioned elements of the games are found in most pre-modern societies around the globe since the oldest times, both in ancient civilizations and tribal societies. The rise of animal protection, the abolishment of duel cultures and sadistic punishment systems belong to cultural transformations that arise as late as the era of enlightenment and modernization. It can be shown that psychic-cognitive structures account for the ubiquity of the cruel practices in pre-modern societies and for their abolishment during the processes of modernization. Cross-cultural psychology is able to link these historical cognitive structures and transformations to empirical results detected among different contemporary cultures around the globe in the past 70 years.

Key words: moral behavior; history of morals; cognitive development;
humanism; empathy; arena games; history of violence;
cruelty

1. Introduction

This article applies the scientific tools of developmental psychology in order to explain some relevant aspects of the history of morals and customs. The article is based on "Structure-Genetic Sociology" (Oesterdiekhoff 1997, 2000, 2006, 2006 b), an approach stemming from Piagetian Cross-Cultural Psychology, using its empirical results for the reconstruction of the history of mankind, especially the history of science, world-view, religion, law, morals, customs, behaviour and other issues. This article focuses on the development of social cognitions (empathy, sympathy, taking over perspectives), moral judgments (human rights, justice) and peacefulness (cruelty, sadism), understanding these several parts of social cognition as different dimensions of the ontogenetic psychic-cognitive development. The historical development of psychic-cognitive and socio-moral abilities will be demonstrated by analyzing the Roman games, where deadly combats both between humans and between humans and animals, agonizing chases with animals and sadistic executions took place in the arenas. This article shows that these relevant elements that constitute the arena games are not tied to Roman antiquity but are found in all ancient and pre-modern societies. The systemic cause for the ubiquity of these three forms of cruelty across all pre-modern cultures is found in the elemental psychic-cognitive stage of pre-modern populations. The decline of these three forms of primitive cruelty in modern societies during the past few centuries is essentially the consequence of the rise of intelligence and cognitive operations of the populations, a cognitive growth implying mental, social and moral dimensions. Thus, both the ubiquity of these forms of primitive cruelty across all pre-modern societies and their abolishment since the age of enlightenment and early modernization must be referred to basic structures of psychic-cognitive development. This is the reason why modern mankind looks at the antique Roman games with awe while the old Romans were horrified by cannibalistic cultures. Developmental psychology can demonstrate that this historical development of moral sentiment and sensibility is rooted in the ontogenetic path of cognitive development.

2. Theoretical approaches

2.1. Norbert Elias's Civilization Theory

Among the classical sociological, ethnological and psychological approaches Norbert Elias's Civilization Theory (1976), known as the last classical sociologist, is the only one to have the necessary equipment to explain the essential structures of the history of violence and cruelty in a sufficient and encompassing way. The Civilization Theory consists of an assumption of a dialectical relationship between psycho- and socio-genesis, between psycho-cognitive and institutional structures. Elias describes the lower, elementally-child-

like level of the development of personality, psyche, cognition, emotion, and behaviour as the usual and normal traits of adult humans in pre-modern societies. Thus, the Civilization Theory is basing on concepts stemming from developmental psychology, outlined in the frame of Freudian concepts of drives and personality. Personality and behaviour both of children of all societies and adults of pre-modern societies are, compared to modern adults, more dominated by drives ("Id"), while the "Ego" is less differentiated and the "Super-Ego" is weaker developed. Thresholds of shame and embarrassment are less developed, so that pre-modern humans live and act more directly, spontaneously, emotionally, at lower levels of considering consequences and circumstances. The ability of thinking in logical and abstract ways is not as strongly developed as it is among modern, educated persons (Elias 1976, Vol. 2:312-454).

It is useful to apply the concepts of Civilization Theory to the explanation of both pre-modern practices of cruelty, sadistic punishment law systems, arena combats and chases, and its abolishment for the past 250 years. The extent of naivety, recklessness, shamelessness characterizing the behaviour of both the spectators in the arena and the arena games in general can only be explained by considering that the personality structures of pre-modern populations were shaped by more simple and elemental psychic stages. Elias's thesis, referring to the psychic maturation of European mankind at the eve of the modern world, delivers the convincing explanation for the abolishment and disappearance of these brutal forms of entertainment and punishment.

2.2. Structure-Genetic Sociology as successor of Civilization Theory

Developmental psychology has been showing for more than 100 years that the development from suckling to adult is a continuous process characterized by the steady maturation of personality, thinking, interests, morals, and abilities. This ontogenetic development is basically a biologically rooted process, although it is affected by social influences which shape the content of the ontogenetic structures only a little but influence the timetable of passing the stages and the summit of the final stage of maturation adults can attain. The proof of this fact is immediately evident by considering that across all cultures babies cannot speak, children are not able to think in formal-operational ways, and only adolescents can acquire the capacity of constructing theories.

Jean Piaget delivered the biggest and most influential contribution to the foundations of developmental psychology. It is useful to interpret his approach not as one which is opposite to other theories and ideas but as an encompassing work that better expresses the common insights and general assumptions of developmental psychology. According to his stage theory, the *sensory-motor* stage of the suckling is succeeded by the *pre-operational* stage

of the child where thinking processes and representations are established. Only in the third stage of *concrete operations* the logic of actions can be formed when visually given objects can be logically structured and co-ordinated. After the tenth year of age thinking attains the fourth stage of *formal operations* that implies the thinking processes gaining experimental, hypothetical-deductive, abstract-logical and systemic capacities.

These various cognitive structures are the key for the understanding of the development of personality, emotion, thinking, world-view, morals, and behaviour. By every higher stage the human being acquires new possibilities of thinking and behaviour and surpasses primitive forms of thinking and behaviour (Piaget/Inhelder 1980; Piaget 1984; Werner 1959).

Piagetian theory has been applied and tested across pre-modern societies for more than 70 years. More than 1000 enquiries in more than 100 cultures have been carried out in this time span. All humans across all cultures develop the characteristics of sensory-motor and pre-operational stages in the same way. But the concrete operational stage is not developed by all adults in pre-modern cultures but only by varying percentages, and if it is developed then not in all areas of experience but only in several areas, depending on specific interests prevailing in certain cultures and depending on individual capacities and experiences. Formal-operational thinking is either not at all or only little and sparsely developed among adults of pre-modern societies. While the development of pre-modern adults stops at an earlier level, modern adults attain comparatively higher levels of cognition. Pre-modern adults differ from children by their major life experience but not by their cognitive, qualitative structures.

Cross-Cultural Psychology found out that cultural factors account for these divergent development paths. Divergent cultural *chances* and *forces* cause different final stages adults can attain. Primary and secondary socialisation practices, especially the quality and amount of school education, are the relevant factors which compel or restrain the final stages of adults, a fact that is valid across all races, nations, and cultures (Lurija 1986; Hallpike 1994; Dasen/Berry 1974; Dasen 1977; Mogdil/Mogdil 1976; Freitag 1983; Poortinga 1977; Schoefthaler/Goldschmidt 1984; Oesterdiekhoff 1997, 2000, 2006, 2006 b).

If illiterate humans of contemporary developmental regions (village residents, socially weak city dwellers) do not attain the formal operational stage, then it is quite clear that the mental development of humans from pre-modern cultures 200, 2.000 or 20.000 years ago were tied to pre-formal levels, too. Only the modern educational and cultural ideas and institutions provided the incentive to force the psychic-cognitive development above the pre-formal level, while humans of pre-modern cultures were normally characterized by the lower levels of cognition (Oesterdiekhoff 1997, 2000, 2006; Hallpike 1994; Lurija 1986).

Against these facts developmental psychology gains the status to be the most fundamental Historical Psychology respectively Historical Anthropology. Developmental psychology provides the essential key for the understanding of personality, psyche, thinking and behaviour of pre-modern (and modern) humans. Structure-Genetic Sociology has given evidence to the fact that the reconstruction of the history of science, religion, law, customs, morals, and behaviour can be worked out on the basis of Piagetian stage theory (Oesterdiekhoff 1997, 2000, 2006, 2006 b).

This Piagetian result is confirmed by the other branch of intelligence research, the psychometric approach. Thousands of empirical studies have proven that pre-modern populations across all races and nations develop IQ scores between 50 and 75, compared to British IQ scores of today (100). For more than 120 years scores have been rising especially in the industrialized countries, but more and more in the developing countries, too. The rise of intelligence is called the "Flynn effect" and corresponds to the rise of the above mentioned cognitive operations. Both branches of intelligence research come out with the same empirical observations and theoretical conclusions (Bayley 1955; Raven 1993; Flynn 1987; Neisser 1998; Irvine/Berry 1988; Oesterdiekhoff 2006, 2007).

2.3. The contribution of Lawrence Kohlberg's developmental psychology of morals

Cognitive maturation manifests by different steps of moral thinking and behaviour. Jean Piaget (1973) called the lower stages of moral thinking moral realism, while the higher stages, called the autonomous morals, unfold not before early adolescence. Piaget himself realized that the moral structures of children correspond to the morals of pre-modern societies. The "objective responsibility" of children is similar to the "Erfolgshaftung" of ancient law, the "immanent justice" fits the ordeals, and the general understanding of law matches the idea of "ordo" (the good, old law). The transformation of sadistic to humane punishment law and further law developments can be reduced and referred to ontogenetic developmental concepts (Piaget 1973; Oesterdiekhoff 2006:328-426; Hallpike 2004; Raddings 1978).

Lawrence Kohlberg's theory of moral development is based on the Piagetian approach. Kohlberg was able to show that the developmental stages of moral judgment and acting depend on the different levels of general logical structures according to the theory of Piaget (Kohlberg 1996:123 ff, 217 ff; Selman 1984; Snarey 1985).

Kohlberg found six stages of moral development, classifiable in three phases, the pre-conventional (stages 1, 2), the conventional (3, 4) and the post-conventional phase (5, 6). The pre-conventional phase is characterized

by a naïve egoism which can only be limited by strong counter-actors. Stage 3 describes a moral behaviour stemming from the concern to please familiar persons ("house-wife morals"). Stage 4 expresses a moral understanding that identifies moral behaviour with the obeying of laws and rules, norms and conventions. The post-conventional phase contains general and abstract moral principles that are more important and dominating than public conventions (phase 2) or egoistic interests (phase 1) (Kohlberg 1996:126-132; Kohlberg/Turiel 1978:18 ff).

The pre-conventional phase is identical with the moral thinking of all children up to their tenth year of age and corresponds to thinking processes below the level of formal operations. The two succeeding phases correspond to different levels within the stage of formal operations (Kohlberg 1996:124 f). Around 80% of all persons of 24 years of age or older in industrial societies are distributed at stages 3, 4, and 5. 20% of them achieve stage 5, only a few of them 6. This result refers to all populations of industrial or industrializing societies around the globe (Kohlberg 1996:34, 98, 106; Kohlberg/Turiel 1978:45).

All enquiries among populations in pre-modern and pre-industrialized cultures have proven that adults there cannot surpass stage 3 but are distributed at stages 1, 2, and 3, whereby only the responsible leaders and chiefs attain stage 3 (Kohlberg/Turiel 1978:46; Tietjen/Walker 1985; Edwards 1974, 1975; Kohlberg 1996:58; Nisan/Kohlberg 1982; Gorsuch/Barnes 1973:283-296). Oesterdiekhoff (2006:302-306), Snarey (1985:202-232) and Hallpike (2004:202-232) offer an overview of these cross-cultural researches in remote societies.

Moral judgment states 4, 5 and 6 are not generally found in interviews with traditional adults who live in small scale societies such as isolated tribal communities... rather only stages 1 to 3 seems to dominate among such groups of people (Edwards 1981:268).

According to this always replicated fact one must draw the clear conclusion that the moral psychology of children is identical with the general moral history of mankind. As late as the beginning of modern society major parts of the population have started to develop stage 4, while the moral thinking of more than 90% of humans of pre-industrial societies were tied to stages 1 and 2. This fact implies that the history of law, customs, interactions and morals can be decoded only by the knowledge of the structures of pre-conventional thinking.

I want to present the moral concept "value of life" in order to show the ways in which humans at different moral stages use to judge and act. Kohlberg and his co-workers presented the following story in innumerable enquiries carried out in different cultures: A woman is suffering from cancer. A pharmacist has developed a medicine that could save the woman's life. He

invested 200 USD to develop the medicine and now demands 2000 USD from the sick woman's husband. The husband cannot pay this amount and has the choice between seeing his wife dying or stealing the medicine. Actually he steals the medicine. Was this theft justified, and if it was, why?

The pre-conventional and conventional answers very often imply that the husband should only save the woman's life if he loves her and even if he loves her, as many people say, obedience to the laws which forbid theft is more obliging and justifiably prevents the husband from stealing. Here a pre-conventional answer that is typical for all children from industrialized countries and for adults of pre-modern societies: Jimmy, 10 years old, US-city:

It depends on how much he loves his woman. If he loves her, than he should steal. – Question: And if he does not love her? – Answer: If he wants that she dies then he should not save her life, this is my personal opinion. – Question: Would it be right to steal? – Answer: It would be right because he knows that his wife has to die if he does not steal the medicine. – Question: Has the pharmacist the right to claim so much if no law forbids this high claim? – Answer: Yes, it is his medicine; consider his investments into its development. – Question: Should the judge convict the husband? – Answer: He should imprison him for the theft and the pharmacist too, because he has claimed so much.

Kohlberg (1996:416) figured out numbers typical for industrial populations:

stage	percentage of those who support the theft and say it is justified	the judge should not sentence the husband for imprisonment
1/2	42	33
2	64	12
2/3	67	52
3	62	46
3/4	74	40
4	63	42
4/5	90	100

Not before stage 4 the clear acknowledgment breaks through that the judge should not convict the theft and that this theft is an obligation for everybody to save the wife. But even a large part of those who realize that it is right to save the woman's life do not feel obliged to do so. Helkama (1979), like some others, figured out that only 17% of those who were at stage 3 believed that the husband would be responsible for the death of the woman if he refused to steal. The corresponding rates at stage 4 are 28% and at stage 5 53%. The other group of persons, however, would not feel guilty if they did not intervene by stealing, although appreciating the general idea of doing so. The

higher the stage of moral judgment, the higher the probability of moral practice; with the rising insight into the right the obligation to put the right into practice is climbing at the same rate (McNamee 1977; Kohlberg 1996:447, 285; Piaget 1973).

The readiness to torture humans and the achieved level of mental development are empirically correlated. The famous Milgram-experiment (Milgram 1997) tested the readiness of humans to torture other humans. The tested persons should mediate electric shocks to persons who gave wrong answers. The tested persons were asked to increase stepwise the electric shocks, even to the deadly dose of 450 voltages, although the victims pretended their sores by screaming and crying. 65% of the tested persons "killed" their victims, when they were not in the same room. The "killing rate" sunk to 40% when the victim was in the same room, to 30% when the victim had body contact with the tested person. But 75% of those who attain the post-conventional phase of moral judgment refused to give electric shocks, compared to only 13% of those persons who are in the pre-conventional and conventional moral phases (Kohlberg 1996:16, 286). This fact implies that humans at the lower stages are in most cases always ready to torture and kill other persons when authorities ask them, while the rate of refusals climbs with the reached stage of cognitive and moral judgment. The rise of the higher stages 4, 5, and 6 is a historical process lasting for the last 100-200 years as a consequence of modernization, steadily penetrating the ideas of humans more and more during the past decades and generations. This fact implies that the readiness for sadistic tortures was greater in pre-modern societies than in modern ones; and this readiness will be weakened continuously when the post-conventional stage will further spread and increase due to rising levels of culture and education.

2.4. Developmental psychology of morals as the theory of the moral history of mankind

These results of cross-cultural psychology of morals must be put into the context of "Structure-Genetic Sociology" which demonstrated the prevalence of pre-formal structures of cognition not only for traditional concepts of morals but also for all other topics, for social, logical and physical issues. By using the developmental psychology of morals to explain the historical phenomena of morals, for example to explain pre-modern violence practices such as gladiator fights, sadistic punishment law, cruelty practices etc., it is always necessary to consider that pre-conventional moral thinking does not account alone for pre-modern violence practices but always in coherence with all other pre-formal psychic-cognitive phenomena that constitute the primitive psyche (Oesterdiekhoff 2000:285-314).

Pre-formal thinking is defined by cognitive egocentrism, comparative weakness and narrowness of mind, attention and apperception. The pre-for-

mal mind regularly concentrates, depending on the amount of difficulty of the task that is to be processed, on one central aspect of the phenomenon and fails with co-ordinating and considering several aspects that constitute a phenomenon. To give a famous example: just like all little children, a big part of pre-modern adults believes that the pouring of water from one wide glass to a tall and narrow glass magically raises the amount of water, like hundreds of cross-cultural experiments have astonishingly found out in all pre-modern cultures around the globe. This experiment controls the ability to co-ordinate logical structures of objects given to the senses; therefore it is an experiment to identify the existence of concrete operations. This non-preservation of dimensions and aspects is found across all physical, logical, social, and moral dimensions of experience. This failure is also detected in the difficulty of understanding perspectives or the internal states of other persons etc. (Hallpike 1994; Poortinga 1977; Dasen 1977; Dasen/Berry 1974; Schoefft-haler/Goldschmidt 1984; Oesterdiekhoff 1997, 2000, 2006).

This cognitive egocentrism is an essential basis for ancient cruelty practices such as gladiator fights or sadistic punishment customs. The spectators identify with the victorious killers, not with their dying victims. They feel strong and powerful by identifying with the killers and victors. The spectators live out an egocentric feeling of power and combat when the victors, with whom they identify, bring their victims to their knees. The victorious manslaughter reveals feelings of pleasure; the empathy for the victims is totally missing. It brings pleasure, as all ancient reports show, to observe how the tortures can be extended. How much time does the leopard need to kill and eat the human? Where can the girl find a place to extend the time until the lion will see and attack her? Whoever loves it to see such things, like the ancient people, is characterized by lower levels of psychic development, lower levels of taking over perspectives, empathy, sympathy, moral attitudes. Ancient man concentrates on his own feelings of power, by identifying with the victor, and neglects the perspective of the victim. He is unable to take over all perspectives in a sufficient way, just as he is unable to preserve masses, volumes, lengths etc., due to his pre-formal inability to consider several dimensions at the same time. He is obsessed by his cruel passions to an amount which suppresses all feelings of sympathy and empathy. This explains the naivety, lack of inhibition, and shamelessness of ancient spectators, like it is reported in historical and ethnographic sources (see the reports below).

The rise of the "higher psychic functions" (Vygotski, Lurija, Leontjew) in modernity, of formal operations (Piaget), accounts for the fact that modern populations cannot enjoy such scenes, why they deny them completely and why such cruelty practices have vanished in the past centuries. Formal operations rise the ability levels of taking over perspectives, empathy,

sympathy, sensibility, moral judgment, tendency not to torture but to support other people, to engage in human affairs etc. (Selman 1984; Kohlberg 1996; Snarey 1985; Hallpike 2004) to an amount that makes it impossible to tolerate sadistic punishment practices and executions, cruel chases and gladiator fights, carried out in the context of arena and public festivities (Oesterdiekhoff 2000, 2006 b). Formal-operationally structured modern people cannot avoid taking over the perspective of the victims immediately and sufficiently, and that is why these arena spectacles would be completely denied and prevented if anybody would try to re-establish them again.

The thousands of cross-cultural experiments which have given evidence to the pre-operational or pre-formal ways of thinking of pre-modern populations, for example the non-preservation of volumes or social perspectives, must be connected to the social and moral deficits that constitute and characterize the primitive behaviour of ancient spectators. The above mentioned pre-conventional answers referring to the case of the sick woman must be put into this context, too. In the context of the pre-conventional mind, in the context of the primitive psyche, the life of a person has no absolute value in itself but can be computed and qualified to material interests and needs. The pre-conventional husband can easily accept the death of his wife if he does not love her or if he wants to avoid conviction. If he is not strongly emotionally or materially interested in the life of his wife he feels not at all obliged to help her. This primitive attitude is well-known in ethnographic and historical reports, too (Hallpike 2004:209, 240; Staewen 1991:212; Staewen/Schoenberg 1970:301, 304, 367; Schweitzer 1960). As humans at the lower stages of mental and moral development, according to the Milgram-experiment interpreted in the light of developmental psychology, see no problems in killing other persons by electric shocks, so the populations of pre-modern societies could observe and enjoy, without shame and embarrassment but with lust and pleasure, how women and children were slaughtered, burnt or voraciously eaten by beasts.

The *lack of moral inhibitions* is one dimension of cognitive deficits and psychic primitiveness underlying these phenomena. But the archaic violence phenomena cannot not only be explained in terms of missing inhibitions but also by the *prevalence of special needs* that are nowadays lowered in the subconscious but are not anymore identifiable as conscious wishes. Humans of today would not ecstatically cheer and scream with pleasure when victims were burnt, slaughtered or eaten, as ancient people used to do, thus it is quite clear that aggressive-sadistic drive tendencies (Eibl-Eibesfeldt 1973) are more restricted and limited in the formal-operational psyche and personality than they were in the ancient psyche. Only mentally disordered individuals of today would love such scenes; in antiquity, however, emperor, senators and the people enjoyed these brutal events. Sadistic drive tendencies can overwhelm and dominate the primitive psyche more easily than the psyche

characterized by the "higher psychic functions". The civilized psyche, according to N. Elias (1976), levers the thresholds of aggressive acts and is more successful with suppressing sadistic impulses. That is the reason for the decline of these sadistic violence practices in the course of the past centuries.

3. Historical and ethnographic data on violence and cruelty

3.1. The ubiquity of certain sadistic practices in pre-modern societies

The core of the ancient arena games consisted of gladiator fights, sadistic executions of delinquents, chases with animals and sea battles. The Roman games put these sadistic elements in a splendid context of festivities and ceremonies. The arenas were visited by ten thousands of visitors, among them the state elite of emperor, senators, and knights, so that the Roman games got the status of a unique trait of the Roman culture. But the unique trait can only concern the tremendous expense and the enormous frame, not the single elements that constitute the games. With the exception of the sea battles (*nau-machiae*), all other three elements of the Roman games are found world-wide, more or less in all pre-modern societies, but not at all in modern ones. The ubiquity of these cruel practices in all pre-modern societies hints to the fact that they must be deduced from the universality of the pre-formal, primitive psyche, while the abolishment of these practices in the modern world during the past centuries has been caused by the rise of the "higher psychic functions", a rise that is proven by the empirical facts of cross-cultural psychology.

This universality of these three forms of violence practices can be shown by a short overview.

The fight of gladiators corresponds to the fight between men in front of the tribe, village or people that is found in every pre-modern society. An adult man in a pre-modern society must face such combats either against neighbours or against strangers perhaps once or several times in his life time. Men, women, children, living among Native Americans, in a tribal society in Australia, in a state society in Africa or in medieval Europe, are used to watch such dangerous or deadly combats between hostile men. In tribal societies, the death rates caused by manslaughter within the group are similar to those caused by intertribal fights. About one third of humans living in pre-modern societies in the past thousands of years deceased by violence (Keegan 1996; Keeley 1996; Hallpike 2004; Oesterdiekhoff 2000:285-314; Lafiteau 1987:393; Post 1880).

The duel culture is stemming from the stone ages, is found in every pre-modern society, and stops as late as in the course of modernization (Oesterdiekhoff 2000:296-307; Elias 1976; Hallpike 2004:187-218). Duels

were a part of popular culture, following folkloristic traditions and norms. Knight tournaments consist of both knight duels and combat groups of horse-men, often including deadly outcomes, carried out in front of elite and people, thereby comparable to the Roman games (Bumke 1986, Vol. 1:342-378). All around the world, duels were parts of juridical ordeals (Schild 1980; Post 1880; Seagle 1967). Against this background the gladiator fights in the Roman Empire are easier to understand. Brutal duels were a normal trait in the Roman culture so that the people were not forced to get accustomed to these phenomena. Celtic, Greek or Egyptian people who visited the Colosseum or another amphitheatre were not surprised by such combats because they probably had known such things since their childhood.

The second part of arena games, the sadistic execution of delinquents, is not only typical for the Roman culture but for all pre-modern cultures. The Roman society used, among other places, particularly the arena games for the execution of delinquents. Executions in pre-modern societies are usually held in front of the people to entertain them in the context of a festival. The people enjoyed the execution of delinquents, carried out on market places or in arenas, as an amusing ceremony and as an entertaining event.

First of all the judgment on the ancient punishment law is necessary: It can only be named as deeply inhumane. Humans were torn to pieces and slaughtered like by butchers, their remainders were nailed to gallows, burnt or boiled; they were torn by beasts or killed by gluing pliers. Their bones were destroyed... How could people watch, with pleasant excitement in the context of a festival, how humans were burnt or hung half-coaled? (Schild 1980:93, transl. by G. O.).

These medieval practices, including the full participation of the entire people, are found in all pre-modern societies, among Native Americans, Australian Aborigines, in ancient China and India, Black Africa and ancient Europe as a continuous and permanent phenomenon (v. Duermen 1988:163, 172; Wrede 2004; Oesterdiekhoff 2000:307 ff; Staewen/Schoenberg 1970:285; Post 1880; Seagle 1967; Schild 1980; Lafiteau 1987:400-410; Kiefer 1933:77-95; Hui-zinga 1975:25). Present-day reports on lynch justice in developmental regions can reveal the mental background of these practices:

A boy is lying on his back, fixed by a crowd, screaming in horror... An old, smiling man is ready to cut the boy's hand with a single stroke... All the people were laughing and smiling. And I asked myself what happens in the brains of these people? How can a human stand by and laugh facing such a torture? How can a human enjoy the torture of a small boy? ... And this was Nairobi, one of the most modern capitals in Black-Africa (Richburg 1999:288, transl. by G. O.).

This report is not exotic but typical for the usual behaviour of people in pre-modern social structures when practicing self-justice. This primitive and sadistic cruelty is underlying both the observation and practicing of lynch

justice, execution and punishment practices, gladiator fights and chases in arenas. This kind of ethnographic reports illuminates the public atmosphere and the naïve, brutal and sadistic excitement ancient people enjoyed in arenas when humans were slaughtered and murdered. A pre-formally structured mind, a stone-hearted, narrow-minded and egocentric psyche account for this mentality which underlies ancient cruelty practices.

Not only deadly combats between gladiators and execution practices of delinquents, but also chases with beasts, the third element of the Roman games, are found as typical phenomena in pre-modern societies. Chases with beasts which fought against other beasts or against humans are found in ancient China, ancient and medieval Europe, and other parts of the world. The fight between cocks or dogs is a beloved leisure time practice in all three development continents of today. The fight between men and bulls is known in modern Spain until today. The low level of animal protection and the hard conduct with pets and cattle concern all backward societies. Animal protection movements and the concern for their health and life have been rising since modernity. Both the brutal treatment of animals in the arenas and elsewhere in pre-modern societies and the rise of a more caring conduct must be referred to the explicated trends of cognitive development of mankind (Schweitzer 1960:82, 399; Oesterdiekhoff 2000:299; Friedlaender 1957:474, 487, 493, 512).

The lower psychic-cognitive development of populations in pre-modern societies accounts for the ubiquity of sadistic practices, underlying the culture of deadly combats, sadistic torture and execution, brutal treatment of the animals and related phenomena, in pre-modern societies. The rise of "higher psychic functions" is the central cause for the abolishment of these brutal phenomena and for the rise of the humane punishment system and animal protection in the modernizing countries in the past 200 years.

3.2. The arena games in the Roman Empire

Chases with animals and ritual fights are documented in Italy at least since the sixth century B. C. The building of amphitheatres spread across the whole empire since the year 80 B. C. The arena fights, also carried out in more modest contexts, took place both in small towns and major cities. The arena games became the most exciting part of Roman leisure time activities; the whole people enjoyed these festivities as most entertaining and fascinating for a period of 700 years during the whole existence of the empire. Augustus allowed 66 days per year for the games in Rome, Marc Aurel 135, and the number climbed to more than 175 days in the fourth century. Special games and private activities must be added to these numbers. In the games, organized by Augustus, during his government lasting 41 years, 10.000 men

fought and 3.500 animals were killed (Augustus 2004:26-28). In the Traian's games, 10.000 men fought and 11.000 animals were slaughtered only in the year 107 (Friedlaender 1957:488 f; Grant 1982:31). 700.000 people were murdered only in the Colosseum in the course of about 400 years. Millions of people and millions of animals were killed in the arenas in the whole empire in the course of 700 years.

Chases with animals (*venationes*) were carried out in a splendid, excellent and huge context. Exotic beasts from all parts of the known world were imported and slaughtered. The people enjoyed watching how bulls and lions, elephants and rhinoceroses, leopards and wolves, fought and tore each other to pieces. Sometimes some hundred soldiers, on horses or not, fought against 300 lions or 400 bears. Some fighters (*venatores*) fought alone or in small groups against a selection of beasts. *Ad bestias* was the standard conviction for delinquents who did not belong to the state elite of senators, state officials, and soldiers. The elite (*honestiores*) had the privilege to get executed by the sword. Private persons (*humiliores*) who had betrayed, stolen, raped, seduced, people not always charged with severe crimes but as often with usual or light crimes, had to face to be thrown in the arenas in order to be torn and eaten by the beasts (Wiedemann 2002:86). The people enjoyed to see how humans hanging on a cross were torn and eaten by beasts or how naked girls and women, tied up at a stake, were chopped to pieces. Pictures are showing how naked women, tied and sitting on bulls, were torn down from the bull's necks and killed by jumping leopards (Auguet 1994:107; Baker 2004:125-134; Friedlaender 1957:488 ff).

The delinquents, tied up at a stake, could be lucky if they were quickly killed by a single stroke or bite of a beast. Sometimes they had to sustain a long torture because the beast began its work at the extremities or lost its interest for a while (Auguet 1994:95).

Or delinquents had to kill each other without rules and without chances of survival. Often delinquents were divided into two groups who had to kill each other until the arena was filled with hundreds of corpses. The spectacle was finished not before the last delinquent, man or woman, had died. They were forced by fire and sword to start such fights and had no chance of escape. Such forms of execution of delinquents were most loved by the spectators and were regular parts of the games, especially carried out in the midday breaks (Friedlaender 1957:502; Baker 2004:150-181; Wiedemann 2001:77-108; Grant 1982:99).

The gladiators were educated fighters usually belonging to a specific school and in the hands of editors. About 60% of the gladiators were prisoners of war or slaves, 40% were waged fighters or daring men. But from the end of the first century on the major part of gladiators were not slaves but free persons (Junkelmann 2000). Even senators, knights, several emperors and a lot of women fought in the arena. Nero, Titus, Hadrian, Caligula,

Commodus and other emperors loved to fight in the arena in front of 50.000 people; Commodus fought 1.000 times in the arena (Sueton 2004:187 ff, 261; Friedlaender 1957:472; Grant 1982:85; Baker 2004:147). Most of the gladiators were killed after several fights, within the first months or years of their career, but some of them could survive and were released after some years of fighting (Nyary 1982:31; Grant 1982:23-30, 42; Meijer 2004:45; Wiedemann 2001:127).

The poet Martial praised Domitian (81-96 A. C.) who organized fights between women and dwarfs, a spectacle most beloved by the masses. He understood such fights as a great pleasure, "a fun for the gods who laughed about that". Boys and girls had repeatedly to fight and kill each other because again and again the crowd demanded new stimuli and extreme variations (Friedlaender 1957:466; Wiedemann 2001:119).

Sometimes two gladiators or some groups of gladiators fought. When a gladiator was not killed during the fight but lost his balance and fell down wounded and gave up the fight, the editor decided if the victorious gladiator should kill his opponent or not. A lot of editors were proud to have all inferior fighters killed who had given up the fight due to wounds or exhaustion. But usually the editor gave the decision to the hands of the crowd which by acclamation could decide about life or death of the inferior gladiator. Only hard-fighting and bold inferior fighters had the chance that editor and crowd relieved them. In most cases, weak or slow fighters who gave up the fight or lost the battle had to envisage their death because the disappointed and furious crowd demanded their death. The crowd expected from all gladiators to die without hesitation and refusal (Baker 2004:104-107; Grant 1982:57; Wiedemann 2001:109-131).

3.3. The spectators

The elite of the state sat in the first 19 rows of the Colosseum, the middle class occupied the following 19 rows, and the lower classes and the women were placed in the last rows of the theatre. This sitting order reveals that not only the lower classes but the whole society enjoyed and supported this bloody entertainment. The games were carried out because the people loved and enjoyed them most. The bloody spectacles corresponded to the needs and wishes of ancient man. Whoever refused to see the cruel executions and the agonic fights was held to be a coward and lost all respect. Lawyers compared such weakness with the weakness of men who refused to immediately kill the lovers of their wives, a legal right not only in Rome but in most pre-modern societies, a right that was requested if a man wanted to keep his honour as a bold and proud man (Wiedemann 2001:141 f; Post 1880; Seagle 1967; Schild 1980; Oesterdiekhoff 2000:322-344).

The crowd screamed furiously when gladiators showed a weak performance "and was insulted when a gladiator did not like to die. By whips and gluing irons cowards and slow fighters were forced to attack. The furious spectators cried: 'Kill, whip, burn!' Why does this man refuse to be killed by the sword? Why does that gladiator hesitate to kill his opponent with one stroke? Why does this man dislike dying?" (Friedlaender 1957:484, transl. by G. O.). A lot of reports prove that the spectators enjoyed seeing the blood and the cruelties. The more the events got cruel in the arena, the higher developed the fascination and enthusiasm of the crowd. Sympathy for tortured and chopped women, children, men, and beasts normally did not arise, as all related ancient reports and eye-witnesses reveal (Grant 1982:58, 93; Wiedemann 2001:92, 95 f; Sueton 2004; Augustinus 1989:154-156; Tertullian 2002:67).

The poet Prudentius blames the behaviour of the vestal virgins who used to sit next to the family of the emperor by describing the conduct of one of these virgin priests:

She has such a sweet and smooth mind! She jumps to every sword stroke, and whenever the victorious gladiator stuck his sword into the neck of his opponent she calls him to be her lover, and by directing her thumb downwards, the holy girl orders to tear out the chest of the defeated gladiator, while her victorious idol plunged his sword into the opponent's body (cited in: Wiedemann 2001:154 f, transl. by G. O.).

Neither the terrible smell nor the chopped bodies, neither death of children, women, and men nor the misery of the animals seriously touched the masses. Ancient humans loved to see how victims were chopped to pieces, eaten, burnt, speared, or trampled on. Ancient humans could not only stand to see such cruelties but loved to watch such scenes – two psychic aspects that must be analytically differentiated. The spectator was not a passive consumer but he was the most influential initiator of the cruelties, most responsible for their existence (Grant 1982:91; Friedlaender 1957:473). The primitive psyche of ancient humans is the single cause for the existence of these spectacles! Whoever has stood even in the higher rows of the Colosseum knows how close the incidents in the arena would be given to all senses. Not one spectator could have been prevented from being totally confronted with the spectacle. Koehne (2000:18) is right when writing: "the disgust to regard how humans are being tortured is a relatively recent progress in morals".

The differences of judgment on the games between ancient and modern educated persons reveal more than anything else the tremendous gap between ancient and modern modes of thinking and emotion. We scarcely encounter an expression of disgust in the whole Roman literature, a disgust indispensable for the sentiments of the modern world. In ancient society, the arena combats are usually mentioned with the biggest indifference (Friedlaender 1957:500, transl. by G. O.).

Friedlaender admits only to the late Seneca, as the single author in Roman antiquity, having taken over a modern attitude and a moralistic and humanistic position. He denies such positions for all other ancient intellectuals including Cicero, Plutarch, Horatius, Epictet, Symmachus, Ovidius, Tacitus and all other authors and philosophers. Wiedemann (2001:132) confirms Friedlaender's theory in a long chapter of his book, saying "that all objections by Roman and Greek philosophers against arena games cannot be classified as 'humane' in any modern meaning". Wiedemann maintains that the ancient people never had sympathy for the victims. But Wiedemann's position is too extreme and unrealistic. We find sentences in the writings of Seneca and Tertullian (2002:61) that clearly show the condemnation of the cruelty and reveal sympathy for the victims. It is psychologically impossible that the spectators never had sympathy for some specific victims in some specific situations. Primitive psyche is absolutely not characterized by the total ignorance of sympathy and a steady desire for cruelty but by the weakness of general intellectual considerations and psychic brakes, the lack of high thresholds of shame and embarrassment (Elias 1976) which could sufficiently control the urge of drives and wishes. Primitive psyche is more easily overwhelmed by drives which suppress the appearance of controlling and regulating ideas and objections against living out drive tendencies. The suggestibility of primitive psyche (Carothers 1972) implies that the tendencies of actions develop in a way that suppresses objecting reflections. Operational thinking is more successful in the suppression of irrational or cruel-sadistic tendencies because operational thinking is characterized by the simultaneous consideration of several aspects that is by the self-control of ideas and wishes (Piaget 1984; Piaget/Inhelder 1980; Staewen 1991). But the primitive psyche is more easily overwhelmed by both feelings of sympathy and emotions of cruelty. Thus, a great speaker can drive an ancient big crowd to feel guilty of things they had not really done, so that they are overwhelmed and oppressed by feelings of depression and sadness (Gurjewitsch 1980; Delumeau 1985). But, if primitive man wants to live out and experience his cruel fantasies, like ancient man in the arenas, then he is overwhelmed by his aggressive instincts which are not suppressed by control functions of "higher psychic functions" including the moral instance of "super-ego". That accounts for his incapacity to develop general humane standards that forbid using humans as tools to entertain spectators. The desire for cruelty usually prevented the appearance of feelings of sympathy for the victims, so that usually these feelings could not arise or were totally suppressed. But it is quite clear that spectators who liked a specific defeated gladiator could feel sympathy for his sad fate. But they did not draw the general conclusion that everybody should be saved from this sad fate because the feelings of sympathy were bound to personal relations and specific

circumstances but not to general moral and humanitarian standards. Primitive, pre-formal psyche decides depending on personal interests and specific circumstances, not according to general humanitarian standards and moral principles. This is the difference to modern standards developed in the context of formal operations respectively "higher psychic functions", standards which prescribe that sadistic practices to entertain people can never be justified. Ancient critics could therefore not develop intellectual clubs or unions, political movements or literary circles who tried to abolish these kinds of entertainment. In this sense, Friedlaender's and Wiedemann's thesis is right when they say that the arena games were totally accepted and justified, were seen as absolutely normal aspects of social life.

3.4. The cultural gap between modernity and antiquity

Baker (2004:10 f) puts it rightly:

The enthusiasm of the Romans for this spectacle is a clear fact. Most of the humans of today would head off the incidents in the arena in the outmost horror: It would be absolutely intolerable to watch only once how a living woman or man would be eaten by wild beasts or to regard such scenes for a whole day or for several days.

He continues (Baker 2004:55):

No mentally sane person of today would try to re-establish the arena festivities with gladiator fights – the look at women and men who kill each other on a bloody battle field would arouse a protest storm. But such a modern reaction would have provoked amusement and condemnation in the mind of every average citizen of ancient Rome.

These judgments by Baker are right in every relevant aspect. I am quite sure that a lot of social scientists and historians have not the capacity to grasp these facts in a sufficient way. A lot of them might say that modern humans would like to see such things and might enjoy them in the same way if they would have the possibility. Or they may hint to comparisons to My Lai and Auschwitz, Stalingrad and Dresden, saying that the levels of cruelty were the same. Or they naively point out to hooligans, violent movies and terrorism in order to maintain that not the mentality and psyche but solely the forms of violence have changed.

But it is absolutely unthinkable that in modern arenas in front of 50.000 spectators humans would fight on death or life, naked women would be eaten by beasts and hundreds of delinquents had to massacre each other. It is absolutely unthinkable that present-day spectators would watch such brutal scenes with enthusiasm and fascination and clap and cheer to the most horrible acts, demand the murder of coward fighters and watch in pleasure how beasts eat children and women. It is absolute unthinkable that the

president and ministers of a modern country enter the arena to fight as gladiators and kill humans, as Commodus and other emperors did. It is absolutely unthinkable that president or chancellor would disguise in a beasts fur, enter the arena, carry out sexual activities with naked women tied at stakes – like Nero did (Sueton 2004:261). He was cheered by the masses for this extreme behaviour, while every modern politician who behaved this way would be replaced from the public forever. It would be hard or impossible to find a corresponding example for such an extreme behaviour in all Western countries in the past 200 years.

The cruel punishment law, the agonic fights and chases do not exist in the modern world because they are completely denied. Would any politician try to re-establish these practices, he would immediately be stopped. It would be as abstruse as the introduction of ordeals by fire and water, cannibalism and human sacrifices for the gods.

The denial of these practices has nothing to do with the development of compensates, with institutional barriers or the change of modes and customs. It would be wrong to say that the arena games have completely been replaced by violent movies or football games as mere institutional changes which do not imply psychic-cognitive transformations. On the contrary, the transformation of entertainment and leisure time practices, the transformation from arena games to violent movies or boxing matches are parts of processes of civilization and psychogenetic developments, a process of the extenuation of aggressive-sadistic drives and of the refinement of psychic-cognitive and moral standards. The abolishment of cruel practices is not a mere institutional process but a reflection of the psychic-cognitive progress of modern mankind.

The arena games existed because ancient man was able to watch these things *and* longed for them. The abolishment of these practices is the result of the modern psychic transformation that implies that modern man is incapable of experiencing and tolerating these things *and* has no related desire. Many modern humans would suffer from physical and psychic problems if they were forced to observe such tortures and murders. A lot or most of modern humans would never overcome the memories of such experiences for all their life-time and would need psychotherapeutic treatment with unclear or no success. If modern humans would travel to antiquity by help of a time machine and would visit the arena games they would doubt the idea of the unity of mankind. A big difference to ancient humans who enjoyed the spectacle and cheered with pleasure while modern humans would get sick and turn crazy!

Grant (1982:8) maintained the Nazi-crimes and the Roman games were the worse aberrations of mankind, aberrations of the same level, quantitatively and qualitatively. First of all, his judgment can only be referred to European history; civil wars in China sometimes reached much higher numbers of

victims. Secondly, we must differentiate between the extent of damage and the psychic-cognitive level that causes and underlies this damage. The cruelty of the world wars cannot only be explained in terms of rational game theory, it includes mentalities of the time, that is imperialistic, semi-barbarian and only half-modernized mentalities. But the cruelty of the arena games did not serve political aims, it was pointless, mere fun and was supposed to entertain and please. Emperors fighting in arenas, dwarfs who are killing women, humans burning as lamps, beasts with body parts in their mouths – cultures where emperor, elite of the state and 50.000 people watch such scenes are more naïve, sadistic, childish, unconcerned, stubborn, incalculable and insensitive. It was the heart and the centre of the Roman culture which concertedly enjoyed this, not a small group of idiots and mentally disordered persons.

4. Conclusions

The empirical result of cross-cultural psychology of the pre-formal psychic stage of pre-modern mankind accounts for the history of morals and customs of mankind. The lower levels of psyche are linked to phenomena such as cannibalism, sadistic punishment practices or arena games. Cannibalism belongs to the entire history of mankind, in Oceania and Africa until the 20th century, in America until the 19th century, and remnants of cannibalism could be found in the antiquity of Europe. The reported insensitivity of cannibals when hunting their victims or holding them as cattle until they are fat enough to be eaten gives evidence to the lower psychic-cognitive level of pre-modern mankind. Cannibalism appears as much more naïve, ruthless, and childish than arena games, so that ancient civilizations had attained a higher level than cannibalistic cultures (Volhard 1939; Oesterdiekhoff 2006 b).

Developmental psychology, developed in the context of "Structure-Genetic Theory", gives independent and clear proof to the fact of the lower stages of pre-modern mankind. This fact falsifies all attempts to explain ancient cruelty practices in terms of mere institutions and circumstances. The clear fact of the pre-formal psychic-cognitive stage of pre-modern mankind convincingly proves that phenomena such as cannibalism, arena games, and sadistic punishment practices must be attributed to this psychic stage and must be deduced from it. The inductive chain of arguments, basing on the analysis of ethnographic and historical facts and their inherent logic, must be linked to the hypothetical-deductive argumentation, stemming from developmental psychology, inducing a systemic and coherent theory of moral development.

The incredible sadism of old punishment practices and the wild insensitivity of cannibalism can only be explained by the fact of the dominance of primitive psychic functions. A very simple-minded psyche preferring the direct way from need to satisfaction, a narrow and naïve mind, missing so many sensitivities, reflections and worlds of ideas, usually

believed to be anthropological universals and conditions, must be provided to explain these things. Only among peoples with childish IQ scores of below 70, as cross-cultural intelligence research found out (Berry/Dasen 1988; Oesterdiekhoff 2007; Bayley 1955; Raven 1993; Flynn 1987), is it possible that their emperors are jumping into arenas to behave as sadists, fighters and sexual criminals there.

Therefore, pre-modern populations live in a quite different cultural reality, compared to modern standards, a culture that is characterized by ardour, warmth, emotionality, liveliness on the one hand and cruelty, infantilism, suggestibility, and insensitivity on the other hand. This psychic state resembles relations told by fairy tales. Johan Huizinga (1975:10 f, transl. by G. O.), the great old man of the history of mentalities, excellently knew how to characterize this pre-modern psychic state:

The insensitivity of the callousness of those times was so incredible that we do not know how to condemn it. Life was so colourful and dazzling that one breath accepted both blood and roses. The people staggered between hellish fears and childish fun, sadistic callousness and sobbing emotion like giants with a childlike mind.

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IGRE U ARENAMA ZA RIMSKOGA CARSTVA: DOPRINOS OBJAŠNJENJU POVIJESTI MORALA I ČOVJEČANSTVA

SAŽETAK

Igre su se u rimskim arenama sastojale u osnovi od borbi gladijatora na život i smrt, od okrutnih smaknuća prijestupnika te od lova i borbi s divljim zvijerima. Milijuni ljudi i milijuni životinja ubijeni su u arenama carskoga Rima. Članak pokazuje da su spomenuti elementi igara pronađeni u većini predmodernih društava širom globusa od najranijih vremena, i u starim civilizacijama i u plemenskim društvima. Pojava pokreta za zaštitu životinja, ukidanje kulture dvoboja i sustava sadističkog kažnjavanja dio su kulturalnih transformacija koje su započele tek u doba prosvjetiteljstva i modernizacije. Može se pokazati da su psihičko-kognitivne strukture odgovorne za široku rasprostranjenost okrutnih praksi u predmodernim društvima te za njihovo ukidanje u procesima modernizacije. Interkulturalna psihologija uspijeva povezati te povijesne kognitivne strukture i transformacije s empirijskim rezultatima otkrivenima u različitim suvremenim kulturama širom globusa u posljednjih sedamdeset godina.

Ključne riječi: moralno ponašanje; povijest morala; kognitivni razvoj; humanizam; empatija; igre u areni; povijest nasilja; okrutnost