

The Many Americas: Civilization and Modernity in the Atlantic World

Abstract

Civilizational analysis has not concerned itself too greatly with the historical experiences of the American New World. There are good reasons to correct this position and Shmuel Eisenstadt's principal work on America's distinct modernities goes some way to establishing the colonization of the Atlantic world as an opening phase of modernity. Nonetheless, a more far-reaching analysis of the distinctiveness of diverse American societies can be developed that goes beyond the image of a Protestant North America contrasted with southern Latin cultures. This essay outlines the basis for a more nuanced approach in three steps: a focus on intercivilizational engagement (which goes beyond the notion of 'intercivilizational encounters' developed by Benjamin Nelson and Johann Arnason), examination of civilizational factors neglected by Eisenstadt and reconsideration of the conceptual range of the notion of 'civilization' itself. The archetype of two Americas is replaced by a model of four with some consideration given to indigenous civilizations as a fifth America.

Key words

Atlantic modernity civilization intercivilizational engagement

Modernization studies gifted the social sciences concepts of convergence, path dependent development, and modernization-within-dependency. They conveyed the impression of partial processes of flattening and homogenization resisted in societies immunized by tradition. The globalization paradigm seems to be the heir to this impression of social and economic logics. In the case of the Americas both bodies of thought set northern societies—British in origin and born modern—against the south, regarded as Iberian and traditional. This geometry of tradition and modernity has given rise to an archetype of two American civilizations. In this context, Shmuel Eisenstadt's thought has a special place. The sum of his scholarship is both coterminous with these trends and working laterally to them. His project of a historical sociology of multiple modernities is demarcated as an original program of research and promises much progress towards a more sophisticated understanding. In this essay I set out what is original in his pithy comparison of Euro-American empires and societies and argue for a more nuanced model of many Americas. The line of argument developed here also poses some challenging questions for contemporary civilizational analysis that are raised at the end.

Eisenstadt's recent work casts the Americas as distinct modernities and civilizations. The thread of this thesis runs through several essays on comparative civilizations (2003). However, 'The Civilizations of the Americas' (2002) is the definitive and most extensive statement of this thesis. It expands the conceptual domain of comparative studies of multiple modernities by adding a new world component to it. Dismissing Hartz's thesis (1964) that American societies were only 'fragments' of Europe, Eisenstadt states that patterns imported from Europe were 'radically transformed' (2002: 43) in American environments. As he has done consistently in much of his comparative research, Eisenstadt outlines similarities and differences in the

trajectories of modernity, drawing out the common elements shared with the parent cultures of American societies but also magnifying their distinctive traits.

He singles out four feasible generalizations about the Americas. A fifth can also be discerned. Firstly, the development of collective identities was not strongly influenced by primordial criteria of language, territoriality and historicity. The newness of New World formations was felt acutely by settler communities and this shaped collective identities more and more over time. In the Thirteen Colonies and then the United States a sense of destiny derived from its Puritan origins was heavily imbued with redemptive purpose and a mission in the world. This American myth of pure New World origins is uniquely universalist inasmuch as it established the image of an exemplary young civilization for the rest of humanity. In Latin America, identity revolved around a formal hierarchical ethos that denied the lower strata of society easy access to the centres of decision making. Even so, it still encompassed the symbolic imagery of most groups in society. As a result, multiple social spaces and forms of consciousness developed which diverged along Spanish, Creole and indigenous lines. In all the Americas, the confrontation with imperial power prompted 'a reflexive exercise in coming to terms with their own origins' (2002: 45), but this produced weakly primordial identities only.

The second generalization is that the forms of social and political order are the result of a unique transformation of the premises that emerged from the Reformation.¹ Interpretations of the social order revolve around the principles of civil equality and access to the political centre. There is a rich variety in both British and Latin America. However, they can be analytically taken as singular civilizations separated by two varying principles of social order. This two are so strikingly different that Eisenstadt states that each is a mirror image of the other. In Anglo-America, a metaphysical principle of equality informs civic life. Social solidarity is based on an

ideology of radical individualism that leaves the centre notionally open to all members of the community. By contrast, in Hispanic America, any similar reconstruction of the premises of order was precluded by a hierarchical ethos. Consequently, access to the holders of political power depended on clientelistic networks. Tendencies to centralisation of state power coexisted with strong, but to great degree disconnected, centrifugal counter-currents. Clientelism encouraged both, but fundamentally blocked autonomous access for communities and their social movements.

Unique institutional patterns of elite formation also distinguish North and South. Elitism in North America was based on a capacity to autonomously mobilize particular cultural orientations. It was easier for status groups to form and gain access to the centres of power. Ascription was not strong in the formative colonies and lost legitimacy completely over time. On the other hand, institutional formation in Latin American countries was marked by a culture of hierarchy that ascribed social status. A society of corporatism resulted where the social location, networks of patronage and style of life of particular groups became entrenched and proved difficult to change.

The fourth generalization concerns the overall relationship of Europe and the Americas. Unique modernities emerged out of the long inter-continental encounter with Europe. This was not a clash with an alien power, but self-differentiation from kindred societies. The civilizational premises of Europe were transformed in the New World. In the former, Protestantism had given rise to constitutional and egalitarian conceptions of social order. Meanwhile, the Counter-Reformation's campaigns against heterodoxy had mostly eradicated dissent against existing hierarchies, while affirming the Church's monopoly of the sacred. In the Americas, these premises were revolutionized by the manner in which colonialism took place and the form of

confrontation with indigenous societies. This gave rise to distinct American interpretations of modernity.

Finally, the shape of protest was indicative of the respective ideological and institutional patterns of the British north and Spanish south. In North America, religious, cultural and political orientations were borne autonomously by settler-citizens. Protest movements proliferate, strike successfully and then fade without solidifying lasting ideologies of their own. In Latin America, religion and politics have been the domains, respectively, of the Church and states. Radicalism and strong socialist movements resulted, as pressure built up in the public sphere over a long period of time. The ensuing patterns of protest have become a permanent and even cyclical feature of the modern Latin American figuration.

This briefly sums up the five main foci of 'The Civilizations of the Americas'. It represents a solid advance in the study of multiple modernities. However, it lacks a finer differentiation of North and South American societies. An approach that discerns 'multiple Americas' (Arnason, 2007: 30) should allow for a deeper multidimensional analysis and a more sharpened focus on Canada and the Caribbean. Both of these zones rate brief remarks in Eisenstadt's essay, but no rationale is given for treating them separately. Clearly, there are no grounds for regarding them as distinct American civilizations. However, their specificity is lost if they are seen only as consequences of transformed European civilizational premises and not of the intersection of numerous dynamics. To give effect to a more nuanced perspective a deeper account would have to concentrate more surely on intercivilizational encounters (or, as I reformulate it, intercivilizational *engagement*), fathom other civilizational factors, and reconsider the conceptual range of the very notion of 'civilization' itself. In putting this perspective here, I am not arguing that each of these Americas constitutes a discrete civilization in their right.

Indeed, some could be better studied as regions and sub-regions.² The chief contention here is that it is the intercivilizational ferment of Atlantic modernity that constituted multiple Americas.

Modernity in the Atlantic: Intercivilizational Engagement and the Multiple Americas

The backdrop to an outline of such an account is Atlantic modernity, which can help elaboration of a more nuanced perspective on intercivilizational engagement (Smith, 2006). For decades sociology accepted the proposition that the generic elements of modernity spread outwards from Europe. This no longer stands the test of deeper scrutiny and has been abandoned in favour of a more discerning image of interactive formations. There can be no argument with the simple idea that American societies share in the Western heritage. However, the impression that the Americas fostered Western institutions in a different climate during the long colonial era is mistaken. The alternative idea of Atlantic modernity brings into focus mutual relationships between Europe, the Americas and Africa.³ Three centuries of colonization and empire-building integrated the three Atlantic continents into a hemisphere of linked political, cultural and economic formations. Colonial societies and the successor republics which replaced them were crucibles of dynamic interaction and were shaped by a variety of indigenous, immigrant and Creole traditions. Thus, they were continuously conditioned by the New World environment, in turn conditioning the civilizational dimension of the relationship between Europe and the Americas. Creole-American communities conferred on Europe's empires active constituencies which played a part in shaping the polities, economies and cultures of Spain, Britain and France. The nexus between metropolitan centres and colonial communities was a tension-ridden one in all these spheres. The influence of Americans resumed after the revolutionary turmoil at the end

of the eighteenth century established nation-states and relationships with Europe's oceanic empires were put on a new footing.

In this framework it is possible to distinguish four Americas within a wider trans-continental frame built up by imperialism and consolidated after the world's first wave of decolonization. The United States was the paradigm of republican emergence at this time. Canada also formed out of the revolutionary turmoil that turned over Britain's American Empire, but the circumstances of its creation had a highly determinative effect on subsequent developments, constituting a set of 'heavy legacies' as it were. The Caribbean seems rarely evoked as a separate area. Following Gilroy, it is taken here as a region of 'inescapable hybridity and intermixture of ideas' (1993:4) producing cultures uniquely-constituted through migration and with its own set of entrenched problems. Many scholars invoke Latin American modernity to draw out points of divergence from its Hispanic and Indian origins. Without doubt this strains the terms of its singularity and there are good reasons for reconsidering the tension between regional and cultural diversity and collective identities. Even so, justification for theorizing Latin American modernity can be found, especially if the civilizational resurgence of indigenous nations is fully recognized as a one of its contemporary forces. Indeed, the question as to whether the latter might be a present-day candidate for a fifth America is worth posing.

I discuss the four Americas in the subsequent sections of this essay. Some preliminary comments on the nature of intercivilizational encounters in the Atlantic world set the tone for what follows. In the Americas there was no sustained and proportionate interchange between civilizations in the manner that occurred during the long history of cross-fertilization in Eurasia (Arnason, 2006). Nonetheless, over the course of the quincentenary of Conquest there is a powerful two-sided interconnection between the West and the Americas which constituted the

Atlantic world as an intercivilizational zone. On one side, there has been a prolonged confrontation with African and indigenous cultures and their heirs which has shaped a New World mode-of-being in American societies. Its sources may have been concealed, but the impact of confrontation was no less momentous for this occlusion. Furthermore, it resonates in the multiple forms of trans-Atlantic exchange. Some forms of this are well known; the exchange of people, species and words to name three that are often remarked on. A more diffuse transfer was cultural. The exchange directly informed Renaissance interpretation of classical traditions in European self-understanding by providing points of contrast that were supposedly pre-classical. On the other side was the connection between metropolitan and American cultures, the latter forged in the multiracial context of the Atlantic sphere. One clear instance of this connection was the breakthrough to the formation of national state. On the whole, this was a more extensive process in the Western hemisphere and occurred over a shorter and more clearly defined period in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Obviously it had a profound impact on Europe. In key Latin American countries it featured national traditions which fused indigenous influences with Creole ones. None of these illustrations display fully ground-breaking encounters that sparked all-round reflexivity. However, they echo intercivilizational engagement of a more modest kind. They generate the conditions in which interpretations with a degree of reflexivity on place, knowledge and belonging arise and circumscribe the terms of modern civilizational traditions. Of course, this implies a notion of civilization that incorporates an image of a fully civilizational pre-Colombian sphere, an issue that the final section of this essay touches on.

Migration and civilization: the United States as a migrant society

Eisenstadt's argument hinges on an image of two Americas set apart by divergent metaphysical constitutions: 'the transformation of the civilizational premises and institutional patterns of European societies, as these crystallized...after the Reformation into two major patterns' (2002: 45). The focus on the religious premises is illuminating in so many ways. Yet it also presupposes a central place for universalizing religions in the patterns of Western colonial expansion to the neglect of other factors. In perpetuating the Weberian preference for associating religious traditions and civilizational forms, comparativists risk conflation of the two. Eisenstadt's analysis does end in such a conflation. However, his theorization of Christianity and the Americas' civilizational foundations brings the two in close proximity in unnecessarily restrictive ways. An account of other factors involved in foundational trends, such as the effects of migratory movements and intercultural conditions, would enhance the claim that America's civilizations represent other modernities. At the same time it would work to suggest that the diversity of societies in question exceeds the two patterns that Eisenstadt identifies.

This is especially important for a evaluation of the United States. Among its main dynamics, those easily associated with settler-immigrant societies and the sentiments of belonging that they cultivate demand the most attention. Migration more generally defined Atlantic modernity and thereby re-made the Americas. In British North America, the background premises emerging from Europe's religious schism were transformed through migratory experiences. Communities of believers proliferated through concentrated mixed migration. Over time, a diverse range of colonial regions and provincial loyalties developed along the northeast coastline. Peter Wagner's dialectic of English America's ontological condition captures well aspects of the civilizational logic colonization initiated (2001: 105-6, 112-3, 121-2). Pioneer communities were migratory and exilic both at once. Their experience of loss was supplemented

by a new social bond that they forged. The confrontation with un-encountered indigenous societies forced a communal unity on colonists that were otherwise culturally diverse, adding strength to local feelings of belonging. The bonds that fear thus stimulated integrated colonial-settler perceptions. In other words, migrants were turned into Anglo-Americans, but under conditions of being integrated into a world of contested territories. The transformative American environment profoundly influenced a mode-of being of colonizer-settlers in the context of an extensive war on indigenous worlds.

In time and with repeated waves of migration, the contingent newness of communities pressed itself on the attachments felt for older homelands without necessarily overwhelming them. Vital elements of older social bonds that were inevitably unrecoverable faded. But the new social form of life did not demand the same kind of attachment. This may seem reminiscent of Eisenstadt's notes on 'weak primordial identities', but the new identities were not as fragile as the phrase suggest. Furthermore, his generalization that collective identities only faintly echoed primordial associations submerges the scale of ethnic identities and variation of regional histories. The disembedding effect of migration transformed identities in quite radical and diverse ways. Historians and geographers have mapped the diverse regional and religious identities migrants carried (Altman and Horn, 1991; Meinig, 1986: 80-2). Migrants experienced ocean voyages, settlement and possible relocation later. These were immigrant cultures in which travel and migration, and internal migration were the centrepiece of distinctive modern experiences. Encounters with distant and strange surroundings and peoples fostered a two-sided appreciation of both European homelands and new North American homes as separate places. Furthermore, new North American homes were themselves greatly regionalized, especially in the South. Provincial identities lasted, sometimes in resistance to central authority, but often as a

complement to patriotic sentiment. An intimately-felt sense of belonging to local culture was fostered by four aspects of colonization. It was patterned by territorial expansion that had no European equivalent; by acts of place-naming that cultivated novelty; and by a mutation of language. Furthermore, from the late nineteenth century, belonging was expressed in the architecture and design of cities and in local community memorialization. The US experience was paradigmatically migratory, so much so that the idea of the nation of immigrants clearly developed before the adoption of multiculturalism.

Patriotism emerged but was highly contingent. If it drew on a nucleus of sentiment, then that nucleus persisted through a series of state strategies of classification of the boundaries of ethnicity. A three way tension in nation state formation is evident. The receptivity towards migrants proclaimed by the US government in the late nineteenth century confronted, on one hand, the group-based mode of assimilation practiced in nation building (King, 2005) and, on the other, cultural exclusions exercised by a delimited political community (Dalthorne, 1994; Mennell, 2007:218-223). In the wake of the Civil War, successive Federal Governments had sought to encourage civic loyalty, but could not afford to erode local forms of memory that fashioned provincial ethnic group heritage (Bodnar, 1992). Groups lasted and were uneasily accommodated within civic identity. By the turn of the century, American nationalism was imparting an image of Anglo-American citizenship which belied the multi-ethnic composition energising its social and economic growth. Its ideological self-image set the US apart from most Western hemisphere societies, but so also did its fast-paced immigration until the 1920s. Despite the liberal ideal of the white naturalized citizen, it was pluralistic group categories of race and ethnicity that formed the centrepiece of immigration policy. Thus a regime of 'management' of ethnicity governed the tension between liberal inclusion and group classification. The US is, in

this respect, 'a nation of groups' (King, 2005: 174) that strains the singularity of nationhood. Adding to the strain is the 'blurring of boundaries' evident since the 1960s when minority claims of African-Americans and indigenous nations pressed the terms of American citizenship from one side, while the outgrowth of new immigrant groups further pluralized the cultural and religious landscape from the other (Baubock, 1998). Boundaries blur also in Canada, though the patterns are different and the formative constitution of its polity stood counter-posed to the US.

Canada's heavy heritages

At first sight, Canada looks the obvious contender for the label of 'fragment of Europe'. After all, it swore strong allegiance to the continuing British Empire when it was formed. In fact, its immigrant confederation reflects the circumstances of unique political origins. Its 'heavy heritages' are conspicuously two-sided relating, on one hand, to a political constitution based on negotiation and, on the other, to a founding multinational population whose constituent parts had extraordinary capacity for cultural survival. At the point at which modern Canadian society formed, a pattern of religious and linguistic coexistence unmatched in the Americas started to take shape (though notably under Anglophone command and at the prerogative of the British Parliament). This set the conditions for the 'mosaic society' a label often applied to this other North America.

The Canadian state was rooted in compromise. Its constitutional arrangements were a blueprint for continuity of a political culture of negotiation and bargaining (Drummond, 1982). The early nineteenth century war with the US deepened an identity separate from the Americans. Ideas of North American unity entertained by US politicians and generals were soon abandoned;

there was to be no complement to the South's Bolivarian visualization of a continental union. Subsequent rebellions in Canada and the worldwide expansion of British imperial influence meant that two sets of interests had to be accommodated: one was domestic, the other related to the wider Anglosphere. The determinative role of the state in reaching a diplomatic settlement with Britain left little room for liberal aversion to the application of governmental power to social development. Governments at both national and provincial levels directly aided economic expansion. While the initial Constitution centralized authority in the hands of the Prime Minister, energetic provincial governments were able to acquire greater powers over time. In contrast to the US, its federalism promoted pragmatic responses to persistent problems of sovereignty, the institution of rights and the balance of parliament authority.

Biculturalism results from Canada's dual colonial history. There are also vibrant indigenous nations which have survived better than their counterparts in the United States, which constitute a third force in the political community. Moreover, migration has steadily pluralized Canada's population. Twentieth century strategies of integration were quintessentially assimilationist. But since the 1970s, governmental policies have had to address the tensions between the dominant Anglo-Canadians, Quebecer claims for autonomy and independence and indigenous campaigns for land rights and self-determination. Federalism contextualized integrative strategies and conflicts over ethnicity and indigeneity, whilst also trying to make room for the cultural claims of Quebec's francophone majority. Participation by leading fractions of the three founding peoples in multiculturalism has extended disputes going back to the original foundation of British Canada after the American War. Moreover, there are competing perceptions of the purposes of multiculturalism (Juteau et al, 1998). Anglophones view it as a fragmentation of Canadian citizenship; Quebecers believe it encroaches on Quebec's special

status in the Confederation. Arguably, both positions are averse to pluralism and conceal their own assimilationist biases with one significant consequence: demographic plurality is not matched by a deeper pluralism. The expansion of immigration from across the Pacific and from southern America has widened the range of political issues. Yet the Federal state's multicultural and bicultural arrangements exclude more recent migrants from the centres of social life and thereby produce new social inequalities. The extent to which a new civic pluralism can go beyond communitarianism and the 'jacobinist-assimilationist' model (Jutaeu et al, 1998:100) and tackle these issues remains to be seen. But for the purposes of the present argument, a key point is that the plurality evident in this figuration is so prominent that it has generated public debates around multiculturalism that are more robust than the discourse in the US. The other kind of contrasting cultural mix is that of the Caribbean.

Caribbean Crossroads

At first glance, the Caribbean islands seem to strike resemblance with one another. They lie in intense proximity to one another and drew the interest of each European state tied up in high level rivalry. It would be easy to get the impression that it is simply a crucible of warfare and violence, slave rebellions and regular acts of seizure of rival territories. Closer inspection reveals small islands teeming with an astounding diversity, a crossroads of three continents where interaction produced explosive results. If the US can be called a land of immigrants, then this is a region of newcomers; needless to say, slavery is the other shared feature. Migration and interaction within set its cultural conditions (Chamberlain, 1998; Gilroy, 1993). Creolization is as commonly associated with the Caribbean as any other area of the Americas. The close mix of

European, African and Asian cultures partly accounts for it. It can also be explained by reference to movement itself. The high velocity of traffic of the un-enslaved throughout the region presents a different picture of migration to that of the US with its myths of settlement. Caribbean patterns are harder to construct heroic narratives out of. After what is arguably the greatest single devastation of any indigenous people in the world, the Antilles was uniquely constituted by entirely transplanted populations. Slavery brought millions of Africans; planter demands for immigration brought hundreds of thousands of Indians, Chinese, Javanese and Japanese. The common term *mullato* does not do demographic justice to the combinations this produced. In the Dominican Republic and Haiti, where poverty and social inequality are the greatest it may serve as a substantial term of distinction from the large majority that is visibly African in origins. There, class and race have defined politics since independence. But for many of the other island-nations, it is ethnic plurality born of syncretism which prevails.

The flows of the Caribbean were also economic, far more so in the era of Atlantic empires than at any time since. The slave-based economies of the Caribbean were pioneering laboratories of modern capitalist techniques in accounting, labour discipline, insurance and finance. Slavery and sugar production comprehensively shaped society and economy. Indeed, an entire plantation world formed under the aegis of the French, Spanish and British empires in the nineteenth century. This world left a stubborn legacy of economic monoculture, which proved difficult to break. Migration provided an exodus from the remains of plantation monoculture and poverty. To some extent this dynamic overtook the legacies of the past. The search for opportunities elsewhere motivated movement, particularly to Europe and the US. Such 'pull' factors were accompanied by 'push' pressures, particularly economic development and

diversification in the Caribbean nations themselves which enabled greater mobility while also stimulating a desire for it.

Thus the region produced its own diasporas, as well as drawing peoples to it and uniquely creolizing them. Moreover, the volume and velocity of migration has been continuous. This has been stunningly evident in the post-war period: net emigration from the area has constituted about 20% of total global migration (Chaney 1987: 8). The waves of Haitians, Dominicans, Cubans and Puerto Ricans to the US have further swelled the Hispanicization of the population. Former colonial powers are the other well-known destinations for emigrants: Britain, France and Holland far more so than Spain. It comes as no surprise to learn that there is significant variation between the four host nations. Even so, scholars have recently observed a commonality: there is a comparative closeness of connections between those who have left and home (Chamberlain, 1998). There is significant sociological evidence of an intense Caribbean consciousness stemming from these strong transnational links. The Caribbean also transnationalizes its cultures: the products of its music, literature, poetry, art, nationalist politics and its theology travel the world. In turn, features of British, American, Dutch, Indian and French cultures are brought back on return journeys and visits. It is not too speculative to assert that empirically-speaking Caribbean identities trend towards some of the most mobile in the world today. This has been taken as a sign of globalization and postmodernity. But also there may be room for a view of a Caribbean form of modernity,⁴ though a compelling and comprehensive explanation of it has yet to be given.

The Latin Americas: place, reflexivity, modernity

The proposition that we can speak meaningfully about Latin American civilization is today tested by the continent's variety—a point repeatedly made in post-colonial retrospection (Mignolo, ???????????).⁵ In contrast, the political and social sciences previously guided by modernization theory have managed generalization without too much difficulty. Latin American societies were thought traditional, steeped in received practice, habit and belief. Eisenstadt's essay shows an appreciation of the wide variation of institutional patterns. But he also stands by his generalization these are mirror opposites of Anglo-American civilization. All engaged in debates over Latin American modernity/postmodernity agree that the Hispanic past has left a distinct imprint on the present. The point is that it has not necessarily done so in ways suggested either within the modernization paradigm or from postcolonial positions.

The discussion of this America begins with people. A starting point is the observation that the Conquest was distinctly ferocious. Out of colonialism emerged a demographic spectrum of immense variation and along with it strong sentiments of attachment to place. Recent historical, geographic and anthropological research stresses that mobility characterized cultural-demographic trends of *mestizaje* (blending) and, most importantly, shaped the way that *mestizo* cultures are thought about (Gruzinski, 2002; Leon-Portilla, 2003). Indeed, the boundaries between different groups were quite porous and subject to the transforming effects of second and third periods of migration. If the demography is more fluid as a result of migratory dynamics than historians of Spanish America have believed, then it should be said that some groups' corporatist cultures were more stable than others. Ruling elites have thrived on national myths which emitted the appearance of primordial connections to the land. The steadfast identification with place was grounded in a genealogy connecting their nations with the conquerors who had spilt blood in what they believed to be a just war of possession. In Mexico and the Andean states,

occupation established a second kind of primordial relationship. Appropriation of heroic Aztec and Incan myths enhanced the intermingling of elements in new and changing collective identities. But note that this was not universal in South America.

This is only a sketch of the variability of ethnicity and identity in the South American countries. However, it hints at some of the difficulties entailed with considering Latin American as a unified civilization or modernity. Therefore, for the purposes of this section, modernity is treated as, firstly, a zone of reflexive interpretation and, secondly, as identifiable forms of cultural distinction. As Giddens and others like to tell us, the rise of reflexivity should be taken as the indispensable sign of modernity. Is it too speculative to suggest that Atlantic experiences increased reflexivity among Europeans in Europe and in immigrant-settler societies?⁶ Clearly in the North Atlantic Anglosphere it is not. But there is ample evidence of this in Latin America also. Currents of alternative reflexive thought, which were not entirely part of Western modernity, are attributable to aspects of public life in all the American states. The ferment of Atlantic modernity produced new traditions and advocates to propound them who were in contact with one another. Its results are well established for revolutionary Anglo-America, but neglected or too easily dismissed when it comes to Latin American societies. Thus, the debate around Pocock's Atlantic Republicanism thesis is well known.⁷ It is easy enough to confidently conclude that political philosophy and the public sphere was an important part of a distinct revolutionary American modernity. But are there comparable Spanish, Creole and Latin American interpretations of modernity? I suggest that there are three relevant currents which deserve discussion.

The first is the less well-known works of early critical ethnology attributable to colonial era thinkers. Kurasawa's notion of the 'ethnological imagination' is worth testing in a non-

European context (2004). He defines this as a capacity acquired through comparative experience and inquiry to reflect knowledgably on one's own social world. Intercivilizational encounters were indispensable in the crystallization of ethnological thought in Europe. Even if the great encounter with the Americas does not constitute a thoroughgoing intercivilizational exchange, it might gainfully be categorized as a significant process of intercultural learning in the context of conquest and survival. Despite unprecedented violence and the dissonances of radically variant imaginaries, there was clear and well documented cultural transmission that led to re-imagination. On the European side, the contribution of awareness of the New World to the internal dynamics of the Renaissance has been well established (Elliot, 1992; Pagden 1993). On the other side, it has to be recognized that retrieving the cultural legacy of the conquered remains an epistemological challenge (Clendinnen, 1991). But there has been sufficient groundwork done in philology, ethno-history and anthropology to suggest that original elements of indigenous ensembles neither survived in full nor disappeared completely, and that important vestiges remain. The intercultural pattern involves 'centuries-long processes combining gradual transformation with deep continuities' (Lockhart, 1992:5), even where chronological sequences have varied. This is not uniform and passive absorption of the conquering cultures, but instead the practices of interpretation, creative adaptation and alteration characteristic of larger-scale intercivilizational encounters. Furthermore, if it stimulated self-reflection on European cultures-of-origin, then it was intercultural in character and capable of generating ethnological questions.

The following comments only amount to an outline of early ethnological traditions. The work of eighteenth century Jesuits provided counterpoints for the philosopher-travellers of the European Enlightenment in a larger epistemological debate about the status of the New World and its civilizations (Andrews, 1998; Canizarez-Esguerra, 2001). The Jesuit position was one of

intercultural experience and contact, rather than remote criticism. When the Jesuit order was expelled in 1767, it carried a large body of ethnographic knowledge into exile. Its members became a concentrated movement that flourished in Italy's humanist culture (Rosales 1988). Access to reproductions and interpretations of Mesoamerican codices meant that they could contemplate the imagery, content and epistemological form of Indian traditions in environmental conditions removed from the inter-racial intensity of Spanish America. Their memories were defamiliarized in an exercise in self-relativization. Back in Latin America, Jesuit perspectives enlivened an Indian revivalism at a time when antagonism between Creoles and Spanish authorities was growing. Appropriation of the heritage of the Mesoamerican empires nourished romantic reconstructions of the past which could be effective in the ongoing dispute with pugnacious Enlightenment polemicists. Between different influences on their investigations, the Jesuits redefined the conception of civility in such a way as to expand recognition of the fully-formed character of Mesoamerican languages, forms of historical narration and even modes of cognitive abstraction associated with them.⁸ In effect, features of what was believed to remain of Aztec and Incan cultures (the latter now rehabilitated as ancient examples of civic virtue) were chronicled, interpreted and pressed into the service of a defence of nascent Creole patriotism.

This is a brief outline of this tradition and only more detailed work can put it in a civilizational frame. The second and third currents of modern reflexivity are found in two later phases of modernism. If we can speak of tangible Latinity, in the sense of cultural distinction, then we can follow Goran Therborn's conclusion that it is marked by 'two brilliant national moments' (1999: 26-9). Latin identity distinguished itself by its veneration of North American and European cultures and then by its substantial departure from them. In the first moment, late nineteenth century positivism had an original and profound impact in bringing an ordering

mentality to science, architecture, urban design and government. Needless to say, it was technocratic in its instrumentalist effects. A subsequent 'humanist modernism' of the early twentieth century reacted against this by fashioning Parisian trends to mark out a space that did not fall back on Iberian or North American conservatism. In literature, art, politics, city planning and even university reform, a pan-Americanist ideal with democratic potential was articulated. While employing an avant-garde mode, it distinguished itself from European and North American trends and asserted an Otherness sharpened by its southern location.

The shared features that mark out Latin American modernism are therefore open to different cultural infusions. This is especially so with respect to reactions against positivism. Partial intercultural traditions were established on the basis of attempts to recuperate, reconstruct and thereby make a civilizational heritage. Latin American thought coalesced with the reception of the writings of early Americanists such as Bolivar, Marti, and Bilbao. Through art, song, poetry, literature and especially philosophy and politics, the new Americanism activated both the aesthetic and historical dimensions of collective memory (Schutte, 1992). Imagination and science found a place in expressions of modernity. The post-positivist elevation of *mestizaje* and indigenous identities, though varied, gave voice to intercultural perspectives consolidated by Jose Gaos, Jose Mariategui and Leopoldo Zea. To be sure, this reflected a curtailed alterity. But its horizons were dialogical and spanned phenomenology, Marxism and Indo-Americanism. In this respect, Zea's celebrated work is representative, in that it describes well the reaction to positivism and the revival of regional and civilizational confidence. Latin America's marginality had become a source of self-consciousness of the American condition of 'in-betweenness'.

Claims of *interculturalidad* in the Americanist tradition flow from this. From a post-colonial perspective, they are open to dispute on the grounds that authentic diversities are not

recognised; clearly a spirited debate has taken place about this point (Fornet-Betancourt, 2004). One conclusion is beyond doubt, however. If Latin American thinkers set out the terms of a single, continent-wide tradition, then it has subsequently diversified, connecting many indigenous, American and Hispanic currents (Dussel, 2003). Civilizational traditions are made in this way, in the interstices of established perspectives. As a provisional conclusion, I would return to Therborn's specific perspective to state that the legacy of Latin America's intercultural trends can be counted part of the store of 'the world heritage of modernity' (1999: 30). It is here that we find the clearest indications of the distinctiveness of American diversity in what had been the Spanish Empire.

Conclusion: civilization reconsidered

Reflections on the four Americas raise two issues about notions of civilization that it seems appropriate to comment on in context of the current volume. The first refers to what counts as a civilization, and what does not. Reviewing the etymology of the family of words around the notion of civilization reveals a good deal about its historical underpinning (Pagden, 1998; Rundell and Mennell, 1998). In the course of eighteenth century debates the idea of civilization became associated with ideals of progress and exceptionality. This imagery was powerful even in the absence of the fully-developed set of terms used to articulate it in the nineteenth century discourse of *mission civilisatrice*. At that time, an evolutionist conception of civilization formed in full. Its development often occluded the diversity and complexity of non-European societies that did not share the ostensible objects of civilization. When it came to Amerindian states, recognition of the Mesoamerican empires as civilizations was unsettling due to their spiritual

practices. But their visible complexity was too compelling to ignore. In contrast, stateless and tribal cultures were deemed pre-civil and primitive. Archaeological, ethnographic and anthropological research has since revealed a startling array of connected indigenous worlds with highly sophisticated cosmologies, regular trading patterns and, in some cases, developed political systems. They were rich before the Columbian era and many have since proved resilient. The specific complexity of their political, economic and mythic-symbolic apparatus—never fully recognized in the past—combined with the undeniable lines of cultural continuity suggest civilizational qualities. But the status of indigenous societies within the civilizational studies more generally is an unresolved and largely un-debated issue. Addressing it may well occasion some conceptual re-thinking and validate the claim that indigenous civilizations can be treated as a ‘fifth America’.

The second issue is the absence of intercivilizational encounters. Where the historical record shows rich examples of civilizations across the world encountering one another in long-term exchanges, processes of mutual learning and cross-fertilization of science and technology, it is clear that something extraordinary happened in the Americas. The Columbian epoch began with an outright collision of social imaginaries at radical variance with one another, which has marked the social formations of the Atlantic world ever since. In some instances, this forced intercultural learning in migratory societies that engaged many symbolic sources. For Europeans it meant newfound cultural interaction with worlds not previously known to them. All the heirs to the civilizations that inhabited the Americas had to engage in a mode of interaction that was both destructive and creative in its consequences. In this context, the horizons of Europeans, colonizer-settlers and Americans were open enough to acquire a structure of comprehension of dissimilar modes of life even when the results included ongoing enmity, bewilderment and

misunderstanding as well as realization. For surviving Amerindians, the mode of interaction instigated strategies of cultural survival and preservation which have turned at the end of the twentieth century to regeneration and reconstitution.

A conceptual framework that incorporates this dimension of engagement of civilizations is a necessity if the dynamism of the multiple Americas is to be appreciated in full. But this is also the most persuasive aspect of the civilizational paradigm-in-the-making: its emphasis on intercivilizational dynamics. Examples from the Americas require the sharpest focus on it, but also suggest different grades of interaction are also possible. This element of interaction is not emphasized so greatly in Eisenstadt's comparative sociology of the distinct new civilizations of the Americas. Without doubt, his work is a bold challenge to Hartz's long-standing perspective on the fragments of European modernity. However, he has not as yet argued the thesis out to its fullest extent and the promise of the introduction to his principal essay is not fulfilled in its entirety. A perspective that sets intercivilizational engagement as its centrepiece and is less encumbered by an objectivistic conception of civilization can be a basis for more progress in this field of scholarship.

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¹ See Spohn for a variation on Eisenstadt's approach (2003: 275-6). See the first section of Knobl's socio-geography of regions and modernities for further critical comments on Eisenstadt's sociology (2006). Arnason also discusses wider issues of civilization and region (2003:314-322).

² Two further regions could warrant separate treatment. The historical experiences of greater Brazil are clearly distinct from Hispanic America and could be considered a whole other America. The US South is a region greatly neglected by historians and comparativists until only recently. As Knobl shows (2006), a thorough examination of its contingencies casts the history of the US in a significantly different light.

³ Gilroy's groundbreaking conception of the Black Atlantic as a zone of interaction ('a system of cultural exchanges') not a region of national states inaugurated a broader scope of history.

⁴ Miller's ethnography of Trinidadian modernity might be considered a starting point on this issue (1994).

⁵ Two recent works present perspectives that are within the orbit of civilisational studies. DOMINGUEZ. A companion which reads well alongside of Dominguez is Whitehead (2006). His balance between the diversity of state and elite formations and resemblances between different Latin American countries leads him to group nations in various configurations for comparative purposes. Like Dominguez, his multidimensional analysis steers between the Scylla of postmodernist fears of totalization and the Charybdis of impressionistic generalization.

⁶ I am indebted to Barry Carr for this observation of my treatment of the discovery of otherness in *Europe and the Americas*.

⁷ Surprisingly, Eisenstadt makes no mention of it and concurs with an earlier consensus around the United States' tradition of liberalism.

⁸ Clendinnen's incisive history of interpretation sets out how the Spanish documented and shaped recorded memories of different dimensions of Mesoamerican social life. In the process, they captured specific threads of this abstraction whilst also noting where it was lacking (1991). See her 'Epilogue' in particular.