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In the Name of Civilization: War, Conquest, and Colonialism

Brett Bowden
Western Sydney University

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Abstract

At its inception, the idea of civilization was imbued with a sense of progress, peace, and optimism. The historical record, however, belies much of this sense of optimism. Somewhat paradoxically, civilization has come to be closely associated with conflict and conquest. In the two-hundred-and-sixty years since the term was coined, many things have been done in the name of civilization; sadly, among them are such grave matters as war, conquest, and colonialism.

Keywords
Civilization, Progress, Perfectibility, Conquest, Colonialism.

En nombre de la civilización: guerra, conquista y colonialismo

Resumen

En su concepción, la idea de civilización estuvo atravesada por un sentido de progreso, paz y optimismo. No obstante, el archivo histórico contradice en gran medida este sentido de optimismo. De manera paradójica, la civilización ha llegado a estar estrechamente vinculada con conflictos y conquistas. En los doscientos sesenta años desde que el término fue acuñado, muchos actos se han realizado en nombre de la civilización; lamentablemente, éstos han incluido cosas tan graves como la guerra, la conquista y el colonialismo.

Palabras clave
Civilización, Progreso, Perfectibilidad, Conquista, Colonialismo.

Introduction

On the reverse side of the Victory Medal, also known as the Inter-Allied Victory Medal, which was awarded to many of those who served in the First World War are inscribed the words: "THE GREAT WAR FOR CIVILISATION 1914-1919.[1]" Eighty years on from the "war to end all wars"[2], then United States President, George W. Bush, responded to the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 by declaring a "war on terror" that is "civilization's fight" or a "struggle for civilization"[3]. When we consider the notion of the "burden of civilization" and all that has been done in its name[4], one has to ask: How did the idea of civilization–so often thought of in a positive light, particularly by its many European advocates, despite their often less-than-civilized methods in advancing civilization–come to be so closely associated, perhaps even synonymous for some, with conflict and conquest? Walter Benjamin poignantly illustrated this point when he noted that there "is no document of civilization which is not at the same time a document of barbarism"[5].

The concept of civilization occupies a particularly prominent and complicated place in the history of ideas. Its place in world history more generally is even more complicated, as alluded to above. The significance of the idea of civilization is captured by the French linguist, Émile Benveniste, when he declares it to be "one of the most important terms in our modern lexicon." He further describes civilization as one of a small number of "essential words" or ideas intimately connected to the "whole history of modern thought and the principal intellectual achievements in the Western world"[6]. Benveniste is essentially right in that civilization is a distinctly Western idea, but it must be noted that it has also had a significant impact in the non-Western world, particularly in relation to the notion of the burden or sacred trust of civilization.

This gives us a clue as to why civilization has something of a dark side, so to speak. John Maynard Keynes was on to something when he argued that the "ideas

1 The medal was issued by more than a dozen countries, including Cuba, the Spanish inscription reads: "LA GRAN GUERRA POR LA CIVILIZACIÓN." Robert Fisk took the inscription for the title of his book, *The Great War for Civilisation: The Conquest of the Middle East* (New York: Vintage, 2007).

2 See H. G. Wells, *The War That Will End War* (London: Frank & Cecil Palmer, 1914).

3 See "Selected Speeches of President George W. Bush 2001-2008", consulted in January 2018, available at https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/infocus/bushrecord/documents/Selected_Speeches_George_W_Bush.pdf.

4 See Brett Bowden, "'Poisons disguised with honey': European Expansion and the Sacred Trust of Civilization," *The European Legacy: Toward New Paradigms* 18, no. 2 (2013).

5 Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt (New York: Schocken Books, 1969), 256.

6 Emile Benveniste, "Civilization: A Contribution to the History of the Word," in *Problems in General Linguistics*, Mary Elizabeth Meek trans. (Coral Gables FL: University of Miami Press, 1971), 289.

of economists and political philosophers, both when they are right and when they are wrong, are more powerful than is commonly understood." As he added, "soon or late, it is ideas, not vested interests, which are dangerous for good or evil"[7]. Whether it is ideas associated with Marxism-Leninism, responsible for the deaths of untold millions in revolutions gone awry, or expansionist liberalism in the guise of colonialism, the consequences of ideas and the language that accompanies them reverberate well beyond the realm of abstract theory and the ivory tower–they can have a very real impact on actions and outcomes. As Heinrich Heine, the German writer and poet pithily observed: "The thought precedes the deed as the lightning the thunder"[8].

A century-and-a-quarter later, Isaiah Berlin pointed out in his essay "Two Concepts of Liberty," how Heine had warned the French in the early 1830s "not to underestimate the power of ideas: philosophical concepts nurtured in the stillness of a professor's study could destroy a civilization"[9]. Berlin might well have added that the idea of civilization itself is one of those powerful concepts; as is the language of civilization more generally. The ideal of civilization, or the norm of civilization, along with antithetical terms such as barbarism and savagery, have long been used and manipulated by powerful political and cultural figures to explain, rationalize, and justify decisions and actions that have shaped the course of history.

When the French historian and statesman, François Guizot, set out to describe the characteristic features of European civilization, he did so in a generally positive manner, noting that

> the first fact comprised in the word civilization (…) is the fact of progress, of development; it presents at once the idea of a people marching onward, not to change its place, but to change its condition; of a people whose culture is conditioning itself, and ameliorating itself. The idea of progress, of development, appears to me the fundamental idea contained in the word, *civilization*[10].

In celebrating literature, the sciences, and the arts, Guizot declared: "Wherever [hu] mankind beholds these great signs, these signs glorified by human nature, wherever it sees created these treasures of sublime enjoyment, it there recognizes and names civilization." Similar to others before him, Guizot identified "Two facts" as integral

7 John Maynard Keynes, *The General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money* (London: MacMillan and Co., 1936), 383-84.

8 Heinrich Heine, *Religion and Philosophy in Germany: A Fragment,* trans. John Snodgrass (London: Trübner & Co., 1882), 160.

9 Isaiah Berlin, "Two Concepts of Liberty," in *Four Essays on Liberty* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), 119.

10 François Guizot, *The History of Civilization in Europe*, William Hazlitt trans. (Harmondsworth, Penguin, [1828] 1997), 16; emphasis in original.

elements to the "great fact" that is civilization: "the development of social activity, and that of individual activity; the progress of society and the progress of humanity." Wherever these "two symptoms" are present, "[hu]mankind with loud applause proclaims civilization"[11].

Following Guizot's proclamation it was another French historian, Lucien Febvre, who stated that the word and idea of "*Civilisation* was born at the right time." "Above all," he added, "it was born at a time when, emerging from the entire *Encyclopédie*, the great concept of rational and experimental science was beginning to make itself felt, constituting a whole in its methods and procedures"[12]. The air of enthusiasm surrounding the newly born concept of civilization and the general atmosphere it engendered at the time is captured by Febvre in an unidentified citation he quotes from the work of the Belgian scholar, Albert Counson: "Civilisation is inspired by a new philosophy of nature and of man. Its philosophy of nature is evolution. Its philosophy of man is perfectibility"[13].

This enthusiasm for the idea of civilization gives very few hints to the doubts and darker side that would come to be associated with the concept. The Swiss literary critic, Jean Starobinski, would later forcefully articulate the dangers associated with this philosophy of perfectibility and the deification of civilization more generally. He asserted:

> [B]ecause of the connection with the ideas of perfectibility and progress, the word *civilization* denoted more than just a complex process of refinement and mores, social organization, technical progress, and advancing knowledge; it took on a sacred aura, owing to which it could sometimes reinforce traditional religious values and at other times supplant them. The history of the word *civilization* thus leads to this crucial observation: once a notion takes on a sacred authority and thereby acquires the power to mobilize, it quickly stirs up conflict between political groups or rival schools of thought claiming to be its champions and defenders and as such insisting on the exclusive right to propagate the new idea[14].

11 *Ibid*., 18.

12 Lucien Febvre, "*Civilisation:* evolution of a word and a group of ideas," in *A New Kind of History: from the writings of Febvre*, Peter Burke ed., K. Folca trans. (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1973), 229-230; emphasis in original.

13 *Ibid*., 230.

14 Jean Starobinski, "The Word Civilization," in *Blessings in Disguise; or The Morality of Evil*, Arthur Goldhammer trans. (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), 17; emphasis *in original.*

Starobinski went on to highlight some of the consequences of this situation, one of which is his prescient warning that a "term fraught with sacred content demonizes its antonym." He continued:

> Once the word *civilization* ceases to denote a fact subject to judgement and becomes an incontestable value, it enters the verbal arsenal of praise and blame. Evaluating the defects and merits of the civilization is no longer the issue. Civilization itself becomes the crucial criterion: judgement is now made in the name of civilization. One has to take its side, adopt its cause. For those who answer its call it becomes ground for praise. Or, conversely, it can serve as a basis for denunciation: all that is not civilization, all that resists or threatens civilization, is monstrous, absolute evil. As rhetoric heats up it becomes legitimate to ask for the supreme sacrifice in the name of civilization. This means that the service or defence of civilization can in certain circumstances justify the recourse to violence. Civilization's enemies, the barbarians, if they cannot be educated or converted, must be prevented from doing harm[15].

As noted at the outset, violence on a grand scale in the name of civilization has been something of a recurring theme throughout much of recent history. As Starobinski went on to note, the demands of civilization effectively became a "justification for colonization" as the "sacred value of civilization supplanted that of religion"[16]. Before discussing the relationship between civilization and colonialism in more detail, it is worth first taking a closer look at the concept of civilization.

Civilization and Its Implications

I have discussed the origins and meanings of the term civilization at length elsewhere, so will not go into too much detail here[17]. Once coined, an initial concern with the concept of *civilization* gave way to detailed studies of *civilizations* in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, in large part instigated by the foundation and development of the fields of anthropology and ethnography. Such a shift led to claims that a broader concern with the normative-evaluative aspects of civilization had "lost some of its

15 Starobinski, "The Word Civilization", 29-30; emphasis in original.

16 *Ibid*., 18.

17 See Brett Bowden, "The Ideal of Civilisation: Its Origins and Socio-Political Character," *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy* 7, no. 1 (2004): 25-50; *The Empire of Civilization: the Evolution of an Imperial Idea* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2009); Bowden ed., *Civilization: Critical Concepts in Political Science, 4 volumes* (London and New York: Routledge, 2009), vol. 1.

cachet"[18]. The result of this shift was a preoccupation with narrow definitions such as that offered by Emile Durkheim and Marcel Mauss, who state that a "civilization constitutes a kind of moral milieu encompassing a certain number of nations, each national culture being only a particular form of the whole"[19].

One of the leading and most influential exponents of the comparative study of civilizations was the historian Arnold Toynbee. In his *Study of History* as well as in related works, however, he did not completely set aside the ideal of civilization, for he stated that "civilizations have come and gone, but Civilization (with a big 'C') has succeeded" or endured[20]. Toynbee also sought to articulate a link between "civilizations in the plural and civilization in the singular," noting that the former refers to "particular historical exemplifications of the abstract idea of civilization." This abstract idea of civilization is what Toynbee referred to as the "spiritual terms" of the idea which "equate civilization with a state of society in which there is a minority of the population, however small, that is free from the task, not merely of producing food, but of engaging in any other of the economic activities–e.g. industry and trade–that have to be carried on to keep the life of the society going on the material plane at the civilizational level"[21].

Toynbee's line of argument concerning the organization of society as marked by the specialization of skills, the move toward elite professions and the effective use of leisure time is one that has long been held in connection with the advancement of civilization and civilized society. It is found in the work of Thomas Hobbes, for instance, for although he preceded the term civilization, Robert Kraynak argues that "the primary theme of Hobbes' studies in civil history is the distinction between barbarism and civilization." Hobbes is said to equate the "*political* characteristics" of "'commonwealths,' 'cities,' or 'polities'" with their "*civilized* qualities," such as "'civil society' or 'civil life'," to the extent that "he regards civilization as a condition which combined a certain level of political development and a certain manner of living"[22]. This is suggested in Hobbes' assertion that the "procuring of the necessities of life (…) was impossible, till the erecting of great Common-wealths," which are "the mother of *Peace*, and *Leasure*," which is, in turn, "the mother of *Philosophy* (…) Where

18 Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (London: Simon & Schuster, 1997), 41.

19 Emile Durkheim and Marcel Mauss, "Note on the Notion of Civilization," *Social Research* 38, no. 4 (1971): 811.

20 Arnold J. Toynbee, *Civilization on Trial* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1948), 24.

21 Arnold J. Toynbee, *A Study of History*, revised and abridged edition (London: Thames & Hudson and Oxford University Press, 1972), 44-45. Toynbee's use of the term spirit (*Geist*) invokes the distinction often identified in Germanic or Romantic thinking in discussions of *Kultur vs Civilization*; see Bowden, "The Ideal of Civilisation" in *The Empire of Civilization*, chapter two.

22 Robert P. Kraynak, "Hobbes on Barbarism and Civilization," *The Journal of Politics* 45, no. 1 (1983): 90; emphasis in original.

first were great and flourishing *Cities*, there was first the study of *Philosophy*"[23]. That is to say: "Wherever government is sufficiently strong and well-established to provide peace and leisure, men began to cultivate the finer things in life"[24]; the very things that are said to be the outward expression of civilization, such as literature and the arts. In "contrast, savagery or barbarism has been a condition where political authority was developed insufficiently or non-existent"[25]. Kraynak concludes that by Hobbes' account, "civilization has been distinguished from barbarism by the power and sufficiency of political authority, the enjoyment of leisure, and the development of philosophy or the arts and sciences." But, it is the first of these hallmarks of civilization, the presence of increasingly complex socio-political organization, which, in the first instance at least, is the prerequisite and facilitator of the latter qualities.

Some semblance of this general line of argument has been made time and again throughout history, its influence ebbing and flowing with the times. One of the earliest to do so was Aristotle in *The Politics*, in which he posited that "society [meaning the *polis* or state] (…) contains in itself (…) the end and perfection of government: first founded that we might live, but continued that we may live happily"[26]. On this point, Kraynak argues that for "Aristotle and other classical philosophers the good life is the end or purpose of civilization"[27]. That said, not everyone would agree that it is possible, or desirable, to apply terms likes civilization in such an anachronistic fashion. While Aristotle's conception of society might differ from contemporary usage, what this is in effect saying is that the realization of the good life is the purpose of government. Furthermore, it is only by living in society with others that this might be achieved, for Aristotle insists, "whosoever is (…) unfit for society, must be either inferior or superior to man." He further singles out "the man in Homer, who is reviled for being 'without society, without law, without family'"[28]. for, in effect, the absence of at least the first two of these institutions means he is without civilization. Instead, he is either savage or barbaric, or a god. Such accounts of the relationship between civilization, society, and government fit with Anthony Pagden's claim that the "philosophical history of civilization was, then, a history of progressive complexity and progressive refinement which followed from the free expression of those faculties which men possess only as members of a community"[29].

23 Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ed. C. B. MacPherson (Harmondsworth: Penguin, [1651] 1985), Ch. 46, 683; emphasis in original.
24 Kraynak, "Hobbes on Barbarism and Civilization," 90-91.
25 *Ibidem*.
26 Aristotle, *The Politics*, (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, 1912), 3, para. 1252b.
27 Kranyak, "Hobbes on Barbarism and Civilization," 93.
28 Aristotle, *The Politics*, 4-5, 1253a.
29 Anthony Pagden, "The 'defence of civilization' in eighteenth-century social theory," *History of the Human Sciences* 1, no. 1 (1988): 39.

In a 1940 lecture titled "What 'Civilization' Means," R. G. Collingwood spoke of three elements of civilization: economic civilization, social civilization, and legal civilization. The realm of economic civilization is marked not simply by the pursuit of riches–which might in fact be inimical to economic civilization–but by "the civilized pursuit of wealth." The pursuit of wealth is in turn carried out in two ways: through "civilized exchange" and "civilized production." The former means that exchange is carried out justly and fairly in the absence of domination, such as master-slave relationships (which puts him at odds with Aristotle), in accordance with the principles of *laissez-faire* economics. The latter, "Civilized production is scientific production." It is production that is carried out "intelligently" such that "productive industry [is] controlled by an understanding of natural laws." That is to say, it is a mode of production that employs the practice of "natural science (…) wherein, by means of experiment and observation, men find out how to use the forces of nature to the advancement of their own welfare"[30].

The second of Collingwood's three elements of civilization is "social civilization": it is the forum in which humankind's sociability is thought to be satisfied by "the idea of joint action," or what we might call community. It bears the name "civilization" because it is said to have been "civilized" to the point wherein its members refrain from the threat and use of both physical and moral force to induce fellow members to do "what [t]he[y] want them to do," instead employing methods of persuasion to win them over. Completing Collingwood's tripartite definition of civilization is the legal component. The final mark of civilization is "a society governed by law," and not so much by criminal law but by civil law in particular, "the law in which claims are adjusted between its members." Furthermore, while military and ecclesiastical law may well have their respective places in such a society, those places are subordinate to the role played by civil law. Moreover, a "society thus governed by civil law is one in which there is no arbitrary power; no executive, however constituted, able to override the law and no judicature able to defy it"[31]. For Collingwood, then, "[c]ivilization is *something which happens to a community* (…). Civilization is a *process of approximation to an ideal state*"[32]. In essence, what Collingwood is arguing is that civilized society–and thus civilization itself–is guided by and operates according to the principles of the rule of law.

When we combine the collective criteria of Collingwood's tripartite components of civilization: economic civilization, social civilization, and legal civilization, what they amount to is what I would call socio-political civilization, or the capacity of a collective to organize and govern itself under some system of laws or constitution. Not too far removed from Collingwood's concern with the elimination of physical

30 R. G. Collingwood, *The New Leviatha*n, ed. David Boucher (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), 502-508.

31 *Ibid*., 502-511, quote at 510.

32 *Ibid*., 283; emphasis in original.

and moral force via "social civilization" are the more recent accounts of civilized society that address issues relating to the historical and ongoing endeavor to manage violence, if only by removing it from the public sphere. Such a concern is extended in Zygmunt Bauman's account of civilization to the more general issue of producing readily governable subjects. The "concept of *civilization*," he argues, "entered learned discourse in the West as the name of a conscious proselytizing crusade waged by men of knowledge and aimed at extirpating the vestiges of wild cultures"[33].

The nature of the "proselytizing crusade" in the name of civilization is one of the key concerns herein. Its rationale or driving force is not too difficult to determine when one considers Starobinski's assertion: "Taken as a value, civilization constitutes a political and moral norm. It is the criterion against which barbarity, or non-civilization, is judged and condemned"[34]. A similar point is made by Pagden who states that civilization "describes a state, social, political, cultural, aesthetic–even moral and physical–which is held to be the optimum condition for all mankind, and this involves the implicit claim that only the civilized can know what it is to be civilized"[35]. It is out of this implicit claim and the judgements passed in its name that the notion of the sacred trust or burden of civilization was born.

The argument that only the civilized know what it means to be civilized is an important one, for as Starobinski notes, the "historical moment in which the word *civilization* appears marks the advent of self-reflection, the emergence of consciousness that thinks it understands the nature of its own activity." More specifically, it marks "the moment that Western civilization becomes aware of itself reflectively, it sees itself as one civilization among others. Having achieved self-consciousness, civilization immediately discovers civilizations"[36]. But as Norbert Elias notes, it is not a case of Western civilization being just one amongst equals, for the very concept of civilization "expresses the self-consciousness of the West (…) It sums up everything in which Western society of the last two or three centuries believes itself superior to earlier societies or 'more primitive' contemporary ones." Elias further explains that in using the term civilization: "Western society seeks to describe what constitutes its special character and what it is proud of: the level of *its* technology, the nature of *its* manners, the development of *its* scientific knowledge or view of the world, and much more"[37]. With this in mind, it is not too difficult to see how the harbingers of civilization might gravitate toward a "proselytizing crusade"

[33] Zygmunt Bauman, *Legislators and Interpreters: On modernity, post-modernity and intellectuals* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987), 93; emphasis in original.

[34] Starobinski, "The Word Civilization," 31.

[35] Pagden, "The 'defence of civilization' in eighteenth-century social theory," 33.

[36] Starobinski, "The Word Civilization", 32; emphasis in original.

[37] Norbert Elias, *The Civilizing Process*, Edmund Jephcott trans. (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), 5; emphasis in original.

driven, at least in part, by what were sometimes good intentions and a deeply held belief in the burden of civilization.

The issue is not only the denial of the value and achievements of other civilizations[38], but the implication that they are in near irreversible decline. From this perspective, their contribution to "big C" Civilization (if any is acknowledged) is seen as largely limited to the past, out of which comes the further implication that if anything of value is to be retrieved, it cannot be done so without the assistance of a more civilized tutor. Such thinking is only too evident, for example, in Ferdinand Schiller's mistaken claim that "the peoples of India appear to care very little for history and have never troubled to compile it"[39]. Hence, the British took it upon themselves to compile such uneven accounts, as that which was prepared by James Mill and published as *The History of British India* in 1817. Despite never having visited India, Mill's *History*, an attack on William Robertson's *Historical Disquisition* of 1791, relayed to European audiences an equally mistaken image of Indian civilization as eternally backward and undeveloped[40].

It is worth noting here that civilization is a concept that Quentin Skinner would describe as an "evaluative-descriptive" term in that it is used both to describe and evaluate; or pass judgement in the very act of describing. The nature of such concepts is that they can be used to either commend or condemn the actions or peoples they are used to describe, often with serious consequences. Skinner, considered a pioneer of the Cambridge School method, calls an "evaluative-descriptive" concept one "which perform[s] evaluative as well as descriptive functions in natural languages"[41]. The "special characteristic" of such concepts is that "they have a standard application to perform one of two contrasting ranges of speech-acts. They are available, that is, to perform such acts as commending (and expressing and soliciting approval) or else of condemning (and expressing and soliciting disapproval) of any action or state of affairs they are used to describe"[42].

38 See Brett Bowden, "The River of Inter-civilisational Relations: the Ebb and Flow of Peoples, Ideas and Innovations," *Third World Quarterly* 28, no. 7 (2007): 1359-1374.

39 Friedrich C. S. Schiller, "Introduction," in *Civilisation or Civilisations: An Essay in the Spenglerian Philosophy of History*, E. H. Goddard and P. A. Gibbons eds. (London: Constable & Company, 1926), vii.

40 See Ranajit Guha, *History at the Limit of World-History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002).

41 Quentin Skinner, "Rhetoric and Conceptual Change," *Finnish Yearbook of Political Thought* 3 (1999): 61; "Language and Social Change," in *Meaning and Context: Quentin Skinner and His Critics*, James Tully ed. (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1988), 122.

42 Skinner, "Rhetoric and Conceptual Change," 61.

Racial Hierarchy and Standards of Civilization

In 1910, a French advocate of colonialism named Jules Harmand argued that it was necessary to accept as a principle and point of departure the fact that there is a hierarchy of races and civilizations, and that we [Europeans/Westerners] belong to the superior race and civilization, still recognizing that, while superiority confers rights, it imposes strict obligations in return." He further contended that the "legitimation of conquest over native peoples is the conviction of our superiority, not merely our mechanical, economic, and military superiority, but our moral superiority." Harmand thought that our dignity and the dignity of the enterprise "rests on that quality, and it underlies our right to direct the rest of humanity[43].

To this day, questions of imperialism continue to revolve around claims to some measure of superiority and the notion of a hierarchy of civilizations, races, states, or whatever the particular collective in question might be. Just as important is the persistence of the related idea that humanity universally progresses along an evolutionary path from savagery through barbarism to culminate in the exalted status of civilization. Throughout much of history, it was Europeans who saw themselves as representing the highest stage of that process, and it was a condition that other peoples at various stages of arrested development were encouraged to aspire to through tutelage and training. In more recent times, it is the United States that is held up as the shining light of progress and civilization, while countless other states and peoples are characterized as underdeveloped or falling short of modernity. Whoever holds the mantel, part and parcel of self-perceptions of superiority is the self-conferred responsibility that comes with seeing one's self as at the peak of civilization: the sacred trust of civilization; or the duty to civilize those deemed as savage or barbaric, underdeveloped, or pre-modern.

In a similar vein, standards of civilization remain an explicit tool of hierarchy, separating those admitted to the international society of states from those deemed unworthy and denied entry, at least until they can measure up. As the term standard suggests in many contexts, standards of civilization are largely about widely accepted norms and expectations, or *the* norm; in this case, what is required in terms of perceptions about civilized behaviour. The following definition draws on an encyclopedia entry I wrote some thirteen years ago, and not much has changed since then[44]. A standard of civilization is a means historically used in international law to distinguish between civilized and uncivilized nations or peoples in order to

[43] Jules Harman as quoted in Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994), 17.

[44] Brett Bowden, 'Standard of Civilisation', in *Routledge Encyclopedia of International Relations and Global Politics*, Martin Griffiths ed. (London and New York: Routledge, 2005), 776-778. The most detailed account remains Gerrit W. Gong, The Standard of "Civilization" in *International Society* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984).

determine membership in the international society of states. The concept entered international legal texts and practice in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries under the influence of anthropologists and ethnologists who drew distinctions between civilized, barbarian, and savage peoples based on their respective capacities for socio-political cooperation and organization. Operating primarily during the European colonial period, and sometimes referred to as the classical standard of civilization, it was a legal mechanism designed to set the benchmark for the ascent of non-European nations to the ranks of the civilized society of states. Membership in international society conferred full sovereignty upon a state entitling it to full recognition and protection under international law.

The general test of whether a nation was deemed civilized revolved around its degree of socio-political organization and capacity for self-government in accordance with accepted European standards. A civilized state required: a) basic institutions of government and public bureaucracy; b) organizational capacity for self-defense; c) published legal code and adherence to the rule of law; and d) recognition of international law and norms, including those on the conduct of war and diplomatic exchange. If a nation could meet these requirements, it was generally deemed to be a legitimate sovereign state entitled to full recognition as an international personality. In essence, a government had to be sufficiently stable to allow it to enter into binding commitments under international law, and possess the will and capacity to guarantee the life, liberty and property of members of foreign civilized states living and operating within its borders.

The inability of many non-European societies to meet these criteria, and the concomitant legal distinction that separated them from civilized societies, led to the unequal treaty system of capitulations. The right of extraterritoriality, as it was also known, regulated relations between sovereign civilized states and quasi-sovereign uncivilized states in regard to their respective rights over, and obligations to, the citizens of civilized states living and operating in countries where capitulations were in force. In much of the non-European world, particularly in Asia, the Middle East and sub-Saharan Africa, this system of capitulations incrementally escalated to the point that it became the large-scale civilizing missions that in turn became colonialism[45].

Drawing a distinction between civilized and uncivilized peoples was an article of faith that went largely unchallenged in the West until the mid-twentieth century. Not

[45] See, for instance, Pär Kristoffer Cassel, *Grounds of Judgment: Extraterritoriality and Imperial Power in Nineteenth-Century China and Japan* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2012). Capitulations by the Ottoman Empire in their dealings with various European powers in the fifteenth century are among the first example of such formal legal arrangements. The Treaty of Nanking, imposed by the British on China in 1842 following the end of the First Opium War, is one of the better-known instances of foreign interference in, and exemptions from, local legal jurisdiction.

so long ago, our world was thought to be reasonably neatly divided between savage, barbarian, and civilized peoples. In 1877, Lewis Henry Morgan wrote: "It can now be asserted upon convincing evidence that savagery preceded barbarism in all tribes of mankind, as barbarism is known to have preceded civilization"[46]. The idea that one preceded the other and that the "three distinct conditions are connected with each other in a natural as well as necessary sequence of progress"[47]. is deeply related to the notion of a universal history of humankind[48]. The distinction was not limited to anthropology, also finding expression in law and politics, such as James Lorimer's claim: "As a political phenomenon, humanity, in its present condition, divides itself into three concentric zones or spheres–that of civilised humanity, that of barbarous humanity, and that of savage humanity"[49].

The rationale underpinning the emergence of the classical standard of civilization is captured by Georg Schwarzenberger:

> Once civilisation is related to the basic types of human association, it is no longer necessary to be content with the mere enumeration and description of a bewildering number of civilisations. It is then possible to evaluate and to measure individual civilisations in the light of a universally applicable test of the degree of civilisation which any such particular endeavour has attained[50].

While standards of civilization might appear to be a reasonably innocuous principle, in effect, legal distinctions between civilized and uncivilized peoples and the unavoidable interactions between them gave rise to the unequal treaty system and the right of extraterritoriality. As Charles Alexandrowicz noted:

> International law shrank into a Euro-centric system which imposed on extra-European countries its own ideas." As an article of international law, the classical standard privileged the place of Europe-cum-Western civilization as it "discriminated against non-European civilisations and thus ran on parallel lines with colonialism as a political trend [51].

46 Lewis H. Morgan, *Ancient Society* (Cambridge MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1964), 5.

47 *Ibid*., 11.

48 See Brett Bowden, *The Strange Persistence of Universal History in Political Thought* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017).

49 James Lorimer, *The Institutes of the Law of Nations, II Vols.* (Edinburgh and London: William Blackwood and Sons, 1883), I, 101.

50 Georg Schwarzenberger, "The Standard of Civilisation in International Law," in *Current Legal Problems*, George W. Keeton and Georg Schwarzenberger eds. (London: Stevens & Sons Ltd., 1955), 218-219.

51 Charles Henry Alexandrowicz, *The European-African Confrontation: A Study in Treaty Making* (Leiden: A.W. Sijthoff, 1973), 6.

This is why there is some weight to claims about the chequered past of standards of civilization in international law and international society.

Expanding Civilization through Colonization

In the seventeenth century, Juan de Solórzano Pereira cited both Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda and Francisco de Vitoria's *De Indiarum Iure* to further legitimize Spanish occupation and possession of land in the New World. In essence, the Spanish had relied on papal authority to justify their role in the Americas, for as early as 1493, Alexander VI's papal bull *Inter caetera* relied on Columbus's observations of natives "going unclothed" to take responsibility for their salvation. Despite their nakedness, he deemed them "sufficiently disposed to embrace the Catholic faith and be trained in good morals." Thus, the "process of Christianizing" the Amerindians under Spanish control and care was thought to "precede the process of civilizing them"[52]. In effect, civilization was not attainable without Christianity, Catholicism in particular.

By this time, the English were also making their own claims on parcels of the New World, but in this case they appealed to an even higher authority. In 1620, King James I authorized a Patent for the Council of New England which stated that "within these late Yeares there hath by God's Visitation raigned a wonderfull Plague, together with many horrible Slaughters, and Murhters, committed amoungst the Savages and bruitish People . . . to the utter Destruction, Devastacion, and Depopulacion of that whole Territorye[53].

This "wonderful plague" was all part of God's master plan, favouring the English as He did with "his Mercie and Favour, and by his Powerful Arme," such that the land in question, "deserted as it were by their naturall Inhabaitants, should be possessed and enjoyed by such our Subjects and People"[54]. Whereas the Spanish claims to the New World rested on the authority of God's Vicar in Rome, English claims to occupation and possession cut out the middle-man, so to speak, and called directly on the authority of God.

God's will aside, the degree of indigenous occupation and usage of land became a significant factor in the European usurpation of newly discovered territories. One of the most influential figures on this issue was John Locke. Locke was more than just a political philosopher and man of ideas, taking an active role in colonial policy as co-author, with the Earl of Shaftesbury, of the Fundamental Constitutions of

52 Pope Alexander VI, quoted in James Muldoon, *The Americas in the Spanish World Order: The Justification for Conquest in the Seventeenth Century* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994), 40.

53 "Patent for the Council of New England" of 1620, quoted in Muldoon, *Ibid*., 38.

54 *Ibidem*.

Carolina. Locke also served as secretary of the Council of Trade and Plantations from 1673 to 1675. While he was opposed to Spanish-style conquest, Locke was of the view that "where there being more *Land*, than the inhabitants possess, and make use of any one has liberty to make use of the waste"[55]. From Locke's perspective, this was widely the case in the New World, for he wondered

> whether in the wild woods and uncultivated wast[e] of America left to Nature, without any improvement, tillage or husbandry, a thousand acres will yield the needy and wretched inhabitants as many conveniences of life as ten acres of equally fertile land doe in Devonshire where they are well cultivated?[56].

Therefore, if the natives were not going to till, sow, and reap the land in European fashion, then the English were perfectly entitled to do so, and having mixed their labor with the land, they were then also entitled to take possession of it.

The influence of such thinking is evident in the philosopher-jurist Emmerich de Vattel's musings on "the discovery of the New World" and "whether a Nation may lawfully occupy any part of a vast territory in which are to be found only wandering tribes." Vattel asserts that "cultivation of the soil [is] (…) an obligation imposed upon man by nature," therefore it is against the laws of nature that there are peoples "who, in order to avoid labour, seek to live upon their flocks and the fruits of the chase"[57]. Peoples "who still pursue this idle mode of life occupy more land than they would have need of under a system of honest labour, and they may not complain if other more industrious Nations, too confined at home, should come and occupy part of their lands"[58]. In Vattel's thinking, the Amerindians were not properly utilizing the vast lands but merely "roamed over" rather than "inhabited" the land, their "uncertain occupancy" was deemed not "a real and lawful taking of possession." Thus, Europeans permitted themselves to "lawfully take possession of them and establish colonies in them"[59].

Such thinking remained influential for centuries to come, as can be seen in the writing of the Italian jurist Pasquale Fiore, who later argued that, "as a matter of principle, colonization and colonial expansion cannot be questioned"[60]. For it is

55 John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government* (New York: New American Library, 1965), 439, Book II, Sect. 184, emphasis in original; Barbara Arneil, "Trade, Plantations, and Property: John Locke and the Economic Defense of Colonialism," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 55, no. 4 (1994): 591-609.

56 Locke, *Two Treatises*, Book II, 336.

57 Emmerich de Vattel, *The Law of Nations or the Principles of Natural Law,* trans. Charles G. Fenwick (New York: Oceana Publications for the Carnegie Institute, 1964), 85.

58 *Ibid*., 37-38.

59 *Ibidem*.

60 Pasquale Fiore, *International Law Codified and its Legal Sanction* (New York: Baker, Voorhis and Company, 1918), 46.

entirely appropriate "that civilized countries, in order to find new outlets for their ever increasing activity, need to extend their present possessions and to occupy those parts of the earth which are not of any use to uncivilized peoples"[61]. Fiore goes on to write "that the earth is in general designed to serve the needs of everyone and that it is not permissible that savages who are unable to derive any profit from natural products should be allowed to leave sources of wealth unproductive, leaving the ground uncultivated"[62].

In time it was not only the cultivation of land that Europeans thought themselves obliged to undertake, there was also the sacred trust of civilization. James Lorimer, for instance, insisted: "Colonisation, and the reclamation of barbarians and savages, if possible in point of fact, are duties morally and jurally inevitable; and where circumstances demand the application of physical force, they fall within necessary objects of war." The responsibility for upholding this obligation did not necessarily fall upon "individual States," rather, Lorimer thought it best undertaken "by a central authority, emanating from the whole body of recognised and recognising States, and that the process of civilisation should thus become the common task of civilised mankind"[63]. At the time, this effectively meant the international society of civilized states was based on Western Europe, and perhaps, begrudgingly, North America. In due course it would become the responsibility of the League of Nations. In speaking of intervention more generally, the French jurist Antoine Rougier argued that a "Government which fails in its function by ignoring the human interests of the governed commits what may be called a perversion of its sovereignty." In the absence of sovereignty, that is,

> when the violations of the law of human solidarity occur in the case of a barbarous or half-civilized State, in which the disorders have a durable and permanent character, the civilized powers must of necessity have recourse to a more energetic method of control–a control adapted to prevent the wrong-doing rather than to repress it or cause reparation to be made[64].

61 *Ibidem*.

62 *Ibid*., 120.

63 James Lorimer, *The Institutes of the Law of Nations, 2 vols* (Edinburgh and London: William Blackwood and Sons, 1883), vol. 2, 28.

64 Antoine Rougier, "La théorie de l'intervention d'humanité", *Revue générale de droit international public* 17 (1910): 495-496, quoted in Alpheus Henry Snow, *The Question of Aborigines in the Law and Practice of Nations* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, The Knickerbocker Press, 1921), 316-317.

This more energetic method meant that "instead of the right of ordinary intervention there then arises the right of permanent intervention," or colonization[65].

The general rationale behind this line of argument and the driving force behind colonial policy are highlighted by another prominent and influential jurist, John Westlake. He argued that "wherever the native inhabitants can furnish no government" –which he claimed was essentially the case wherever Europeans made contact with native peoples–, then "the first necessity is that a government should be furnished"[66]. It was taken for granted that the "inflow of the white race cannot be stopped where there is land to cultivate, ore to be mined, commerce to be developed, sport to enjoy, curiosity to be satisfied." Moreover, if any so-called "fanatical admirer of savage life argued that the whites ought to be kept out, he would only be driven to the same conclusion by another route, for a government on the spot would be necessary to keep them out"[67]. This line of argument represents another example of circular reasoning, wherein the conquest of indigenous peoples and the usurpation of their land were inevitable no matter what the rationale.

The idea that organized, well governed, civilized peoples –such as those of Europe– generally have an advantage over less organized, ungoverned, uncivilized peoples –as most newly discovered natives were characterized– has a long history when it comes to matters of conquest. Georg W. F. Hegel wrote that "it arises above all in the *Iliad* where the Greeks take the field against the Asiatics and thereby fight the first epic battles in the tremendous opposition that led to the wars which constitute in Greek history a turning-point in world-history." He continues:

> In a similar way the Cid fights against the Moors; in Tasso and Ariosto the Christians fight against the Saracens, in Camoens the Portuguese against the Indians. And so in almost all the great epics we see peoples different in Morals, religion, speech, in short in mind and surroundings, arrayed against one another; and we are made completely at peace by the world-historically justified victory of the higher principle over the lower which succumbs to a bravery that leaves nothing over the defeated[68].

The conclusion Hegel draws from this is: "In this sense, the epics of the past describe the triumph of the West over the East, [the triumph] of European moderation, and the individual beauty of a reason that sets limits to itself"[69]. As he writes elsewhere,

65 *Ibidem*. A similar line of thinking in respect to sovereignty underpins the more recent responsibility to protect principle, or R2P.

66 John Westlake, *The Collected Papers of John Westlake on Public International Law*, L. Oppenheim ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1914), 145.

67 *Ibidem*.

68 G. W. F. Hegel, *Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art, 2 vols*, T.M. Knox trans. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), vol. 2, 1061.

69 *Ibid*., 1062.

the "inner dialectic" of a civilized society drives it "to push beyond its own limits and seek markets" in territories that are "generally backward in industry," in turn generating the "colonizing activity (…) to which the mature civil society is driven"[70]. The conquest of native peoples therefore, whether the Amerindians in the Americas, the Aborigines of Australia, the Melanesians and Polynesians of the Pacific, or the various peoples of Africa, are seen as a largely natural and inevitable series of events that conform to patterns in world-history.

Presenting another side to the argument were anti-imperialists of the Enlightenment-era such as Johann Gottfried Herder, Denis Diderot, and Immanuel Kant[71]. The last of these thinkers in particular is oft-cited as a champion of cosmopolitanism and an avowed anti-imperialist who believed "colonial conquest is morally unacceptable"[72]. Kant wrote in *Perpetual Peace* that a state "is a society of men whom no one else has any right to command or to dispose except the state itself." Furthermore, "to incorporate it into another state, like a graft, is to destroy its existence as a moral person, reducing it to a thing"[73]. He went on to highlight the dangers that Europe had brought upon itself by engaging in such folly. Kant argues that ordinarily we "assume that no one may act inimically toward another except when he has been actively injured by the other"[74]. And this assumption is "correct if both are under civil law, for, by entering into such a state, they afford each other the requisite security through the sovereign which has power over both"[75]. There are, however, exceptions, for Kant's thoughts on the less civilized races led him to claim: "Man (or the people) in the state of nature deprives me of this security and injures me, if he is near me, by this mere status of his, even though he does not injure me actively (*facto*); he does so by the lawlessness of his condition (*statu iniusto*) which constantly threatens me. Therefore," he adds, "I can compel him either to enter with me into a state of civil law or to remove himself from my neighbourhood"[76]. In some ways, then, Kant is not so different from those advocates of European civilizing missions that are designed to elevate the natives from a state of nature into the realms of law-governed political organization, or civilization. Should this fail, or not go according to plan, the same missions become the more violent missions

70 G. W. F. Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, T.M. Knox trans. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1958), 151, para. 246-248.

71 Sankar Muthu, "Enlightenment Anti-Imperialism," *Social Research* 66, no. 4 (1999): 959-1007; Sankar Muthu, *Enlightenment against Empire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003).

72 Martha C. Nussbaum, "Kant and Stoic Cosmopolitanism," *The Journal of Political Philosophy* 5, no. 1 (1997): 14. Michael Doyle argues that "Kant rejects conquest or imperial intervention as (…) wrong." See Doyle, "Kant, Liberal Legacies, and Foreign Affairs, Part 2," *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 12, no. 4 (1983): 325.

73 Immanuel Kant, "Perpetual Peace," in *Kant on History*, ed. Lewis White Beck (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, [1795] 1963), 86-87.

74 *Ibid*., 92, note 1.

75 *Ibidem*.

76 *Ibidem*.

of conquest that compel the threatening savages to "remove" themselves to a neighborhood where they pose less of a threat to the civilized.

As Robert van Krieken notes, the civilizing process "is accompanied by aggression and violence towards those who remain uncivilized, largely because of the threat they pose to the fragility of the achievements of civilization." Equally, "it is this aggression which then underlies the associated civilizing offensives[77]. In effect, civilization and the "state monopolization of violence in fact involved the *exercise* of that violence on groups seen to lie outside the prevailing standards of civilization"[78]. Just as this can be found in Kant, it is also J. S. Mill who makes the point that a "civilized government cannot help having barbarous neighbours". Consequently, and similarly to Kant, he argues that when it does, "it cannot always content itself with a defensive position, one of mere resistance to aggression." For after an indeterminate but intolerably wary time, almost inevitably "it either finds itself obliged to conquer them, or to assert so much authority over them" so that the uncivilized neighbor gradually falls into a state of dependence on the civilized nation. This, Mill insists, accounts for the history and nature of the relations between the British and the "native States of India," for he claims that Britain was never "secure in its own possessions until it had reduced the military power" of neighboring Indian "states to a nullity"[79].

According to Mill, such conquests are justified because barbarous nations have not progressed "beyond the period during which it is likely to be for their benefit that they should be conquered and held in subjection by foreigners." The rationale here is that the "independence and nationality" essential to the development of more civilized peoples is thought a general "impediment" to the uncivilized. Therefore, the "sacred duties which civilized nations owe to the independence and nationality of each other" under the law of nations are not extended to uncivilized societies, for Mill exclaims that "barbarians have no rights as a *nation*." As a result of this principle, he insists that the "criticisms, therefore, which are so often made upon the conduct of the French in Algeria, or the English in India," are in essence based "on a wrong principle"[80].

Edward Said relates a good example of these ideas at work in relation to Arthur Balfour's speech to the British House of Commons of June 13, 1910, as a spirited yet one-sided defense of the British role in Egypt. It was often the case that European conquerors believed that they knew "exotic" civilizations better than

77 Robert van Krieken, "The barbarism of civilization: cultural genocide and the 'stolen generations'," *British Journal of Sociology* 50, no. 2 (1999): 309; emphasis in original. See also Brett Bowden, *Civilization and War* (Cheltenham and Northampton MA: Edward Elgar, 2013).

78 *Ibidem*.

79 John Stuart Mill, "A Few Words on Non-Intervention," in *Essays on Politics and Culture*, Gertrude Himmelfarb ed. (Garden City NY: Doubleday & Company, 1962), 407.

80 *Ibid*., 406-7; emphasis in original. See also *Mehta, Liberalism and Empire*, specially Ch. 3, "Progress, Civilization, and Consent," 77-114.

those people themselves, and were therefore best equipped to act as their overseer. Balfour similarly insisted that "we know the civilization of Egypt better than we know the civilization of any other country. We know it farther back; we know it more intimately; we know more about it." According to Balfour, the well-being of Egypt and its people was best entrusted to the hands of the British. He continued: "Western nations as soon as they emerge into history show the beginnings of those capacities for self-government." But beyond Europe,

> one may look through the whole history of the Orientals (…) and you never find traces of self-government (…) Conqueror has succeeded conqueror; one domination has followed another; but never in all the revolutions of fate and fortune have you seen one of those nations of its own motion establish what we, from a Western point of view, call self-government. That is the fact.

With that "fact", Balfour believed that he had more than found a just cause for British colonial occupation of not just Egypt, but the Empire at large. He further justified Britain's moral case for taking up this responsibility by insisting: "We are in Egypt not merely for the sake of the Egyptians, though we are there for their sake; we are there also for the sake of Europe at large"[81]. According to Alpheus Henry Snow, by the end of the nineteenth century it was "established as a fundamental principle of the law of nations that aboriginal tribes are the wards of civilized States"[82]. Thus, colonization and the sacred trust of civilization were not only for the sake of Europe, but for the sake of the entire uncivilized world.

Conclusion

In 1787, just thirty years after the word civilization was first published in French, Marquis de Condorcet, the embodiment of Enlightenment ideals, declared in *Vie de Voltaire*: "The more civilization spreads throughout the earth the more we shall see war and conquest disappear together with slavery and want"[83]. Condorcet had great faith in the idea of progress and the direction of human history, which would reveal all the phases through which humankind has passed; "the path that it has followed, the steps that it has made towards truth or happiness." He was convinced that civilization and progress "will never be reversed as long as the earth occupies its

81 Arthur James Balfour, quoted in Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978), 31-33.

82 Snow, *Question of Aborigines*, 191.

83 Quoted in Lucien Febvre, "*Civilisation*: evolution of a word and a group of ideas", 257, note 118.

present place in the system of the universe, and as long as the general laws of this system" do not produce some form of cataclysmic event[84].

A little less than two years before he was thrust into the presidency of the United States, on the eve of Christmas 1899, Theodore Roosevelt wrote an article for the *Independent* in which he stated:

> On the border between civilization and barbarism war is generally normal because it must be under the conditions of barbarism. Whether the barbarian be the Red Indian on the frontier of the United States, the Afghan on the border of British India, or the Turkoman who confronts the Siberian Cossack, the result is the same. In the long run civilized man finds he can keep the peace only by subduing his barbarian neighbor[85].

Roosevelt went on to assert: "Every expansion of civilization makes for peace. In other words, every expansion of a great civilized power means a victory for law, order, and righteousness"[86].

The year 1899 was significant in the ongoing expansion of the civilization project: the United States formally became a colonial power, taking possession of the Philippines, Guam, Puerto Rico, and Cuba. In effect, the United States took up Rudyard Kipling's invitation as extended in his poem, "White Man's Burden," which was published in February 1899, including in *McClure's Magazine*. At the same time, *Blackwood's Magazine* of Edinburgh serialized Joseph Conrad's novella "Heart of Darkness" from February to April, 1899, in which he more than hints at the dark side of the civilization project:

> The conquest of the earth, which mostly means the taking it away from those who have a different complexion or slightly flatter noses than ourselves, is not a pretty thing when you look into it too much. What redeems it is the idea only. An idea at the back of it; not a sentimental pretence but an idea; and an unselfish belief in the idea–something you can set up, and bow down before, and offer a sacrifice to"[87].

Despite the confidence of Condorcet, one cannot help but think that there is an inherent contradiction or a kind of paradox associated with the idea of civilization. Despite the positive aura and what might be the best of intentions, the outcomes are

84 Antoine-Nicolas de Condorcet, *Sketch for a Historical Picture of the Progress of the Human Mind*, June Barraclough trans. (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, [1795] 1955), 4-5.

85 Theodore Roosevelt, "Expansion and Peace," in *The Strenuous Life: Essays and Addresses* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1906), p. 31.

86 *Ibidem*.

87 Joseph Conrad, "Heart of Darkness," *Blackwood's Magazine*, Feb-Apr, 1899: 193-220, 479-502, 634-657.

all too often destructive. As noted in the introduction above, Starobinski eloquently highlighted the potential pitfalls associated with the ideas of civilization, progress, and the pursuit human perfectibility. Similarly, as Isaiah Berlin noted in discussing the pursuit of utopian illusions more generally, "to make mankind just and happy and creative and harmonious for ever–what could be too high a price to pay for that? To make such an omelette, there is surely no limit to the number of eggs that should be broken"[88]. But the only thing tangible in such impossible pursuits "is the reality of sacrifice, the dying and the dead (…) [while] the ideal for the sake of which they die remains unrealised. The eggs are broken, and the habit of breaking them grows, but the omelette remains invisible"[89]. Many things have been done in the name of civilization; sadly, among them such grave matters as war, conquest, and colonialism. If the aim of the civilization project is an omelette, then one cannot help but feel that the result is something more like scrambled eggs.

[88] Isaiah Berlin, *The Crooked Timber of Humanity* (London: Fontana, 1991), 15.
[89] *Ibid*., 16.

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About the Author

Brett Bowden. Professor of History and Politics in the School of Humanities and Communication Arts at the University of Western Sydney (Sydney, Australia). Doctor in political sciences and international relations by the Australian National University in Canberra, Australia. His recent publications include *The Strange Persistence of Universal History in Political Thought* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017) and "Civilization and its Consequences", *Oxford Handbooks Online*, 2016. His most

recent work has been awarded with the Norbert Elias Prize (2011), the APSA Crisp Prize (2014), and the G. W. Symes Award of the Royal Geographical Society of South Australia (2019). He is an elected Fellow of the Royal Historical Society, United Kingdom, and an elected member of the Royal Society de New South Wales. E-mail: B.Bowden@westernsydney.edu.au.

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