

Worlds of Difference

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Multiple Modernities and the Promise of Comparative Sociology

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Arguably the most fundamental issue in comparative sociology concerns the proper method for understanding difference, even though it is frequently pushed aside and not addressed. How can differences be understood in social theory through comparisons, and how should social theory relate to regional studies to do so? In other words, understanding *diversity* presents a greater challenge for the social sciences than making generalizations. Among their founding fathers, Montesquieu, Herder and Weber, who tried to come to terms with it explicitly, are exceptions, while Comte, Marx and Durkheim, who made comparisons subservient to the discovery of general evolutionary patterns, are far more typical in social theory. Nevertheless, three generations of comparative sociologies have flourished in both these meta-theoretical camps, albeit with abrupt discontinuities. I wish to briefly survey the first two generations before turning to the present generation that draws its inspiration from the work of Max Weber in the first generation to understand diversity in social dynamics in general and patterns of modernization in particular. As formulated by S.N. Eisenstadt and elaborated by many of us, the concepts of “axial civilizations” and “multiple modernities” can thus make the historical experiences of different world regions (the global periphery) intelligible by comparing their various culturally specific patterns. In the composite “civilization of modernity” emerging from the last axial shift in human history, the encounter between modern European civilization and other internally evolving axial civilizations, formed around different world religions, produces culturally specific patterns of modernization or multiple modernities (Katzenstein, 2010).

The Durkheimian Tradition in Comparative Sociology and Its Normative Subversion

Durkheim (1982/1895: 139) considered comparative sociology “not a particular branch of sociology; it is sociology itself,” while Weber’s final

view of different directions of rationalization in the world religions offered a paradigm for the comparative sociology of civilizations. In the *Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (1912), Durkheim used the data on the Australian aborigines, the remotest possible from the metropolitan setting, to construct a general theory of religion, and used the concept of “collective effervescence” derived from that data to throw light on such metropolitan phenomena as the rise of the universities in medieval Europe and the French Revolution.¹ Durkheim demonstrated his commitment to comparative sociology in a note on the notion of civilization, written with his nephew, Marcel Mauss, where he developed a concept of civilizations in the plural. This diverged radically from the imperialist notion of civilization in the singular, and incidentally helped Durkheim transcend his own hallmark, reified concept of “society.” Mauss (2004/1930) later elaborated this concept of civilizations as a social but transnational, trans-societal regimes or super-systems, extending beyond any given society.

The Durkheimians produced almost no work on modern society, and the *L'Année Sociologique* reviewed very few works on modern industrial society. Instead, the research-oriented Durkheimians embarked either on social anthropology or on civilizational analysis, while the politically influential Durkheimians turned his sociology into civic ethics of the Third Republic. Durkheim did not succeed in creating chairs and departments of sociology, and the Durkheimians dispersed into other disciplines or into academic administration. Nevertheless, the research-oriented Durkheimians, mostly moving to the disciplines of classics, linguistics and Oriental studies, produced a remarkable set of comparative historical studies of the civilizations of China, India, and ancient Greece and Egypt. It should be emphasized that not a single one of the civilizations covered by the Durkheimians was a part of the French empire. Mauss directed Durkheimian research into social anthropology, providing a central institutional base for anthropology in France. In doing so, he inadvertently established the pattern of research that Hountondji (2002) has properly characterized as colonial production of knowledge, with a division of labor between data collection in the French colonies, and analysis and theory-building in Paris. Given the imperialism of the universal (Bourdieu, 1992), the slope from commonplaces of the civilizing mission to sociological theory was slippery indeed. Durkheimian comparative sociology slipped and failed to realize its promise.

Notable among the latter day representatives of the Durkheimian tradition of civilizational analysis in the 1960s and 1970s were Louis Dumont, who published *Homo Hierarchicus* in 1967, and M.G. Smith. The latter’s “plural societies” consisted of component sections or segments that were primordial collectivities or ethnic groups differentially

incorporated into Caribbean societies under colonial rule, and generalized Durkheim's dichotomy of segmentary (primitive) and differentiated (modern) societies into a typology of *differential* incorporation of collectivities (Arjomand, 2010a: 366). Perhaps more revealing than this mainstream development of the Durkheimian tradition is its inflection in the Muslim world on the global periphery. "Society," the Comtean abstraction that was definitively established by Durkheim and generated sociologism, was nevertheless capable of being interpreted variously according to the culturally specific disposition of the countries to which it was transmitted. In contrast to Dumont and Smith, the primary concern there was with the normative rather than analytical development of Durkheim's sociology. To be more precise, the reception of Durkheim in the Muslim world was marked by an intense search for the reinvigoration of *conscience collective*, which according to Durkheim would be greatly weakened in modern societies to make room for the growth of individualism.

The normative turn of Durkheimian sociologism in the Near East is remarkable for the insight it offers into the reception of sociology outside of Western Europe. It presents an intriguing contrast to the earlier reception of Comtean positivism in Latin America (Zea, 1963). In 1910, not long after the Young Turks' revolution in the Ottoman Empire, the rising ideologue of the Young Turks' Committee of Union and Progress, Ziya Gökalp (1876–1924), arranged for a student to be sent to Paris to study with Durkheim and regularly send back his lectures notes. Two years later, Gökalp persuaded the Young Turks to set up the first chair of sociology for him, and an institute of sociology was established at the University of Istanbul in 1915 and launched the first Turkish sociological journal in 1917 (Özerverli, 2007: 320). Gökalp conceived his role as the theorist of the nascent Turkish nationalism in the last years of the Ottoman Empire similarly to Durkheim's own self-conception as the moral teacher of the French Third Republic. This turned sociology decisively in a normative direction. As Gökalp (1959: 165) saw it, the sociologist's "function is not to impose and institute, but to discover elements of the national conscience in the unconscious level and to bring them up to the conscious level." Sociology was a normative discipline "because once the rules of national institutions are discovered and become known, they assume an obligatory character for the members of the nation" (Gökalp, 1959: 169). This is so because it is *national* solidarity that sustains the social order in the modern world.

In his search for a new, modern source of collective conscience/consciousness that intensified in anticipation of the nascent Turkish Republic, Gökalp replace Durkheim's society by the "nation" (*millet*). All other sources of social solidarity, from the family to religious community,

were either too narrow or too broad for modern social organization and would become “auxiliary to the national ideals” (cited in Arjomand, 1982: 96) Making a fundamental distinction between culture and civilization, Gökalp placed both Islam and Westernism under the latter concept, arguing that the key transformation for Turkey and other Muslim nations was that from a theocratic civilization (*ümmet*) to one based on modern nationality. The defining feature of modernity was thus not secularism but the nation. The adoption of the techniques of Western civilization was to be carried out within the framework of Western nationalism (Berkes, 1954). The elite of the new Turkish Republic were the bearers of modern civilization but were at the same time to be nourished by their own national culture to be able to carry it to their people. The values of Western civilization were thus to be blended with the national culture of the people (Yilmaz, 2010). Islam too was to be transformed from an outdated civilization to a modern religion within the national framework, as religion was in fact one of the “pillars of organic solidarity” (cited in Strenski, 2006: 328). To this end, he published in a modernist weekly, *Islam Mecmuasi* (Islamic review), occasionally taught sociology at a Muslim seminary (*medrese*) (Strenski, 2006: 313) and sought to appropriate certain key concepts from Islamic law and jurisprudence. He thus advocated what he called “social jurisprudential theory” (*ictimai usul-i fikh*), and contrasted the variable social law (*ictimai şeriat*) from the absolute revealed law (*nakli şeriat*) (Özervarli, 2007: 323).

The reception of Durkheimian sociology in Egypt was almost as direct and immediate. Taha Husayn, a leading intellectual of the era of Egyptian modernist nationalism, began his doctoral thesis under Durkheim’s supervision, though it was not defended until after the latter’s death in 1918 (Roussillon, 1999: 1363). Although the first chair of sociology at the University Cairo, established in 1925, was not held by an Egyptian, the Egyptian Durkheimians soon took over and dominated Egyptian sociology for a whole generation – that is, until Arab nationalism superseded Egyptian nationalism and the state displaced Egyptian intellectuals by its propagandists of Arabism in its several ephemeral embodiments in Nasser’s United Arab Republics, and of “Arab socialism” of the 1960s (Roussillon, 1991: 140–47). There is an element of personal tragedy in that Sayyid Uways, the most accomplished sociologist to give an Egyptianist definition to the key Durkheimian abstraction, “society,” waited too long to publish his major work (at his own expense) in 1965, in the heydays of the rival Arabist ideological hegemony (Roussillon, 1991: 140–41). More instructive, however, is the turn of the Egyptian Durkheimians to Islam as the inexhaustible source of social solidarity and collective conscience, which was already happening during

the hegemony of the Egyptian nationalism of modernist intellectuals. In Egypt, we witness for the first time the decisive turn of sociology toward Islamism rather than nationalism.

The first Egyptian to hold the chair in sociology at the University of Cairo, 'Ali 'Abd al-Wāhid Wāfi, was a student of Durkheim's disciple, Paul Fauconnier, and obtained his doctorate from the Sorbonne in 1931. In his *'Ilm al-ijimā'* (Sociology), Wāfi identified the key concepts of Durkheimian sociology in Arabic translation as follows: "the specific reality we call 'society' (*mujtama'*) or 'collective conscience' (*al-'aql al-jam'i*)...., as well as the implications of this specific reality which we designate as 'social facts' (*al-zawāhir al-ijtimā'iyya*) and 'social structures' (*al-nuzum al-ijtimā'iyya*)" (cited in Roussillon, 1999: 1373). In his discussion of the contemporary social problems of Egypt in the late 1950s, which includes a vigorous defense of polygamy as a social fact, Wāfi treats Revelation as divine legislation appropriate for advanced societies of the Book and for meeting their fundamental needs perfectly. In Roussillon's (1999: 1379) words, Revelation is "identified as the normative realization of the sociological law itself." Islam as the embodiment of the sociological law that properly regulated the organization and functioning of Muslim societies up to the time of importation of inappropriate norms of foreign civilizations through modern positive laws, but no longer. We have now replaced the perfect Islamic norms, Wāfi argues,

with norms and laws borrowed from societies that differ from ours by environment, civilization, by history and tradition, and by morality and definition of vice and virtue. Our laws are consequently devoid of two conditions: recognizable sacred quality, and conformity to the very nature of [our] society and its needs. (Cited in Roussillon, 1999: 1383–84)

As Wāfi's colleague and former student of Durkheim's disciple, Lucien Lévy-Bruhl, 'Abd al-'Aziz 'Izzat, explained, it is impossible to separate the sociological and the moral aspects of social phenomena (Roussillon, 1999: 1386). Wāfi uses this fact to make the sociology of Islam into Islamic sociology, thus taking a decisive step toward the reshaping of Durkheimian sociology into Islamism.

To see the complete turn of sociology to Islamism and the full ideological impact of Durkheim in the Middle East, however, we need to move to Iran of the late 1960s and early 1970s. 'Ali Shari'ati's search for the authentic source of collective conscience after completing his graduate studies in Paris and returning to Iran led him to Islam. Shari'ati rejected nationalism, Marxism, Freudianism and other Western fallacies as inauthentic importations. On the other hand, he combined this search with

the modern myth of revolution he had inhaled in intoxicated atmosphere of the Latin Quarter in Paris while studying Durkheim's sociology of religion. Islam had to be rediscovered, however. Only an Islamic revolution could remove the distortions and deviant encrustations of centuries and recover the potency of pristine Islam as the source of a reinvigorated collective conscience (Arjomand, 1982: 97–101).

For Shari'ati, the cornerstone of Islam is *tawhid* or the unity of God. Given the Durkheimian equation of God and society, monotheism at the theological level corresponds to a "monistic" social order, which Shari'ati explicates as an egalitarian social order marked by the absence of all forms of stratification. All pluralistic world-views are anathematized as variants of polytheism, and are said to correspond a "polytheistic" (pluralistic, stratified) social order. Furthermore, and this is the crucial step in his politicization of Islam, the *Qur'an* views God and the people as equivalent in social matters (Shari'ati, 1979: 116) In this variant of Islamist sociologism, the Islamic revolution would thus establish a monistic, not to say totalitarian, Islamic political order with the presumption of its infusion with the spirit of God.

Robert Redfield's Comparative Anthropology of Civilizations and Its Subversion by the Metropolitan Modernization Theory

Returning to metropolitan theory, a second notable attempt at the comparative study of civilizations was made when the United States became the dominant world power after World War II. In Europe, Oriental studies had developed in fairly close connection with the British, Dutch, French and belatedly Russian and German empires. The idea of area studies that emerged in the United States was different. Area studies were conceived as the wedding of the social sciences and the study of non-Western civilizations. Area studies were not to serve American social sciences, and help its pretensions to universal validity but rather to provincialize them. The most important project of the period was Robert Redfield's social anthropology of civilizations at the University of Chicago. Redfield saw the study of other civilizations as the means of transcending American parochialism while being "only more true to the universalism that underpins its identity"² (Sartori, 1998: 37). It required the reconciliation of the anthropologist's and the humanist's notions of "culture" in an integrated and ultimately comparative study of civilizations. Redfield distinguished between the "societal" and the "cultural structure" of civilizations, and finally developed the idea of their "historic structure" as relations of temporal hierarchy between a Great Tradition and its Little Traditions, embodied in a respective hierarchy of social communities.

Meanwhile, the Social Science Research Council (SSRC) acted as the most important promoter of area studies in the United States. It is interesting to note that, in the SSRC meetings, Talcott Parsons saw a critical role for area studies in compensating for the limitations of the newly professionalized social sciences, and for cleansing social theory of its provincialism. Generally speaking, however, things worked the other way, and area specialists and social scientists increasingly went their separate ways. Parsons himself moved in the completely opposite direction to the one he had indicated in the late 1940s, proposing in 1954 “a long-term program of scholarly activity which aims at no less than a unification of theory in all fields of behavioral sciences” (cited in Rudolph, 2005: 8). The Cold War began soon after the launching of area and development studies and imposed an extra-epistemic frame on the whole project. It can be argued that the intellectual terrain of the Cold War era doomed the synthesis attempted by the area studies project because of the division of academic labor required by its Three-Worlds “deep structure” – a structure which inexorably made for the mutual insulation of the “third world of tradition, culture, religion, irrationality [and] underdevelopment,” and “the first world of modernity, technology and rationality, a democratic, free and natural society unfettered by religion and ideology” (Pletsch, 1981: 574). There were also important institutional reasons for the failure to fulfill the original promise of area studies which cannot be discussed here. Suffice it to say, that the result was a failure to realize the promise of comparative sociology a second time.³

It can be plausibly said that what killed this second interdisciplinary phase of comparative sociology was the modernization theory that bore the mark of Parson’s general theory. The “historical turn” in metropolitan social theory that began in the mid-1970s signaled the fall of the modernization theory to many (Arjomand, 2004d: 336). I have argued that this turned out to be cold comfort to comparative sociologists, however. The so-called “historical and comparative sociology” that has developed in the United States as an alternative the modernization theory since the 1980s curiously succumbed to the same temptation of regarding the Western patterns as paradigmatic (Arjomand, 2011; see also the reply by Wallerstein, 2011).

From Max Weber’s Sociology of the World Religions to S.N. Eisenstadt’s Axial Civilizations and Multiple Modernities

The impact of Max Weber’s comparative sociology of world religions was by no means immediate. In fact, it only began to serve as a paradigm for comparative sociologists over half a century after his death. In Max

Weber's comparative sociology, the impact of the world religions was transmitted through the social strata or classes that constituted their respective cultural bearers and social carriers (*Träger*). The notion of rationalization as a developmental pattern links the institution-building of the formative periods to the religious solutions to the problem of the meaning of human life. These define the ideal interests of the bearers of the world religions that must be brought into some meaningfully consistent reconciliation with material conditions and historical contingencies. Weber's pluralistic view of social life as compartmentalized into different spheres or domains was also critical understanding of the multiplicity of traditions as well as modernities. In this view, trends in different spheres of social life are explained by their normative autonomy (*Eigengesetzlichkeit*). In civilizational analysis, this would imply a plurality of developmental patterns in divergent and possibly opposite directions.

Noting the dissatisfaction with the dichotomous view of tradition and modernity presumed by the modernization theory, S.N. Eisenstadt (1972) turned to the problem of the "continuity and reconstruction of tradition" and even persuaded the American Academy of Arts and Sciences to put it on its agenda, experimenting first with the term "post-traditional societies" (1972) and finally settling for "multiple modernities"⁴ (Eisenstadt, 2000). Tradition and modernity were combined in "new foci of collective national identity" (Eisenstadt, 1972: 7). Collective identities become central in the political and cultural program in the struggle for the appropriation of modernity on the global periphery, thus prompting the reconstruction of a diversity of traditions throughout the world which produces multiple modernities (Eisenstadt, 2000). This reappraisal of tradition also prompted Eisenstadt's turn to civilizational analysis. Eisenstadt (1986: 6–7) drew inspiration from Karl Jaspers's idea of the Axial Age, attributing the breakthrough to dynamism in Axial Age civilizations to the "chasm between the transcendental and the mundane." For a while, he remained faithful to Jaspers's temporal component of the idea of a breakthrough to transcendence in a specific age – that of the Hebrew Prophets, the Buddha and Plato. Eventually, however, Eisenstadt changed the historical conception of axiality to a typological one, making axiality a cluster of dynamic characteristics (Arnason, 2005: 37).

Eisenstadt further sought to introduce a measure of pluralism in his analysis of each axial civilization. Weber, it should be recalled, had analytically divided the social world into different spheres or domains, highlighting the normative autonomy of each of these. This implied that conflicting patterns of meaning principles of rationality could prevail in each of these and set institutional developments accordingly. In civilizational analysis, this would imply a plurality of developmental patterns in divergent and possibly opposite directions. Eisenstadt attempts

to come to terms with this complexity by heuristically classifying the central and peripheral tendencies in axial civilizations into “orthodoxy” and “heterodoxies.”

Last but not least, Eisenstadt put forward the idea that the basic premises of the Enlightenment generated the breakthrough to a new and distinct axial civilization, the civilization of modernity. This civilization of modernity is the context of the new dialectic of tradition and modernity that produces “multiple modernities” (Eisenstadt, 2003). Arnason (2003: 304–14) has followed Eisenstadt in focusing on the formation and transformation of tradition in civilizations by focusing on the persistence and temporal integration of civilizations. Civilizations are coherent units through time because they relate to their past by means of continuous interpretation and codification, through their historical memory, and by the canonization of certain texts – in short, through the formation and transformation of tradition. I think this is also what Redfield meant by the historic structure of civilization.

The number of studies contributed by area specialists and historians who subscribe to the axial civilizations paradigm is truly impressive (Arnason et al., 2005). Furthermore, the question of distinctiveness of traditions and civilizations and their culturally specific developmental patterns is addressed by several other attempts at civilizational analysis as well (Véliz, 1994; Smith, 2006). Samuel Huntington’s idea of the clash of civilizations (1996) was also a major stimulus to the spread of interest in civilizational analysis, provoking as sharp a reaction in social theory as it did in political debate. It prompted Edward Tiryakian and I to suggest the time was ripe for rethinking civilizational analysis (Arjomand and Tiryakian, 2004/2001). Among the older ideas offering the opposite perspective to Huntington’s, we highlighted the seminal idea of intercivilizational encounters by the late Benjamin Nelson (1980) who had founded the International Society for the Comparative Study of Civilizations. In my own rethinking, detecting the old German distinction between civilization (as techno-scientific and general) and culture (as particular) behind Max Weber’s discussion of the types of rationality and the processes of rationalization, I came to the conclusion that he exaggerated the importance of instrumental and formal rationality in world history. The civilizational processes I was familiar with seemed to involve collective striving for a different kind of rationality: they were processes of value-rationalization. I argued that value-rationalization is a process of harmonization of heterogeneous principles of order that is driven by the judgment of meaningful consistency. In contrast to univocal or unidirectional and generic variants of rationalization developed by Habermas and Schluchter on the basis of *instrumental* rationality, the conception of (*value-*) rationalization is meant to capture diversity and diverse direc-

tionality of developmental patterns. It is the process of architectonic construction of meaning, and can be best explicated in terms of the operation of Kant's (or perhaps Dewey's) faculty or power of judgment, rather than anything Weber himself could come up with.⁵ This meaningful or symbolic consistency (*Sinnzusammenhang*) evolves gradually and often imperceptibly among cultural clusters and is produced by elective affinities, giving rise to civilizational rationalities; it is the consistency that we recognize as "civilizational style" (Arjomand, 2004a). This axial civilizational approach specifies multiple modernities as culturally specific developmental paths to modernity whose direction is set by the axial values of a civilization. I think various periphery-generated contributions to the role of religion and tradition in the evolution of different patterns of alternative modernities can be understood under this general rubric. The challenge was to specify the complex combination of logic, poetic judgment, and historical contingency in this process.

Elsewhere, I have argued for the convergence in the third generation of comparative sociologists between the proponents of multiple modernities comprising various adaptations of the core institutions of the civilization of modernity (Eisenstadt, 2003), and a broader group who mount the second wave of challenges to metropolitan theory from the global periphery, searching for a "southern theory" to formulate concepts on the basis of distinctive historical experiences of different world regions (Connell, 2007a, 2007b). The evidence for the convergence of the two groups is especially notable in India, as shown in the section that follows.

Multiple Modernities and the Diversity of Civilizational Processes

The second generation of sociologists, too, provided us with a paradigm for the civilizational analysis of multiple modernities. Redfield offered a model of two distinct civilizational processes. The first one, which he called orthogenetic and I would call intra-civilizational, was defined as the approximation of the little to the great tradition. The second, which he called heterogenetic and I would call inter-civilizational, refers to innovative trends under influences from other civilizations. His comparative study of civilizations was on a paradigm of the social organization of tradition as continuous communication between local, living Little Traditions and their representatives and the Great Tradition to which they were affiliated. Modernization would then create "a double structure of tradition." In Maya villages, the old structure appeared truncated, broken off and subsisting in folk culture, while the new was continuing and changing (Redfield, 1955). Elsewhere, both layers of this double structure were active. His example of the latter case was the Indian civilization, and he

cited the works of two of his collaborators: Bernard Cohn, for showing that a caste of “leather-workers have improved their position by adopting customs authorized by the high sanskritic tradition,” and M.N. Srinivas, for demonstrating that the Coorgs, once largely outside the Indian Great Tradition, had come to consider themselves Kshatriyas, people of the warrior caste through their world-renouncing holy men (*sannyasis*) (Redfield, 1955: 17–18).

The multiple modernities analytical perspective can explain better than any other the interplay of intra- and inter-civilizational processes that made its first appearance in the social sciences as the paradox of tradition and modernity. An intriguing aspect of rapid social change in independent India, Srinivas remarked, was that the lower castes were being “Sanskritized,” taking over Sanskritic ritual on occasions of birth, marriage and death and employing Brahmin priest. “Sanskritization refers to a cultural process but it is ... usually a concomitant of the acquisition of political or economic power by a caste. Both are parts of the process of social mobility.” Sanskritization was the opposite of Westernization, but the two processes were ongoing side by side (Srinivas, 1992/1962: 119), and were actually linked together in a dynamic relationship (Madan 1995: 4–43). Westernization is Redfield’s heterogenetic process or Benjamin Nelson’s inter-civilizational encounter. Sanskritization, by contrast, is what I would call the distinctive Indian intra-civilizational process needed to provincialize Elias’s Eurocentric idea of *the* civilizing process.

Tiryakian and I have proposed that Islamicization be considered the intra-civilizational process parallel to Sanskritization in the Muslim world (Arjomand and Tiryakian, 2004). Elsewhere, I have shown how the distinctive historical patterns of intensive penetration of Muslim societies by scriptural Islam, and of extensive spread of Islam along its frontiers, were reinforced and interacted with the post-World War II processes of urbanization, spread of education, national integration, and finally globalization to produce what is called the Islamic resurgence of the past four decades (Arjomand, 2004b, 2010b). Needless to say, Islamicization is also an ongoing process among Indian’s own huge Muslim population. Srinivas has been presented as the father of India’s “nationalist sociology” and a chief architect of its Brahminical or what Sujata Patel (2010: 283–85) calls the *savarna* (upper caste) vision of Indian society, and has rightly been criticized for blacking out the non-Brahmin perspective and non-Hindu groups as well as diverse Hindu sectarian traditions. Although Srinivas himself (1992: 57) later hinted at “Islamisation” as a process set in motion by the national integration in independent India, alongside Westernization and Sanskritization, his methodological Hinduism, to use T.K. Oommen’s (2008: 76) apt characterization, inevitably tends to exclude well over 40 percent of

the Indian population that does not subscribe to Sanskritic Hinduism. As Oommen (2008: 73–75) points out, “Islamization and Tamilisation” are also major current intra-civilizational processes in contemporary India.

The closing decades of the twentieth century witnessed a spontaneous interest in the problem of continuity and reconstruction of tradition in India, Iran and elsewhere. The issue was in fact addressed much earlier in Indian sociology. While Parsons was developing his dichotomous “pattern-variables” contrasting tradition and modernity, a more distinctively peripheral view of tradition was being elaborated in India. D.P. Mukerji (1894–1961), who presided over the first Indian Sociological Conference in 1955, wished sociology to serve the “task of reconstructing Indian culture through intelligent adaptation and assimilation of new forces in the light of a reinterpreted past” (cited in Madan, 1995: 3). Drawing on Dilthey’s hermeneutic understanding of tradition, he considered it “a condition of rather than an obstacle to modernization,” and elaborated the concept Madan calls “*generative* tradition” (Madan, 1995: 18, 22). He insisted on the historicity of tradition and the dependence of the culturally specific pattern of modernization on it. No genuine modernization was possible through imitation as a people who abandoned their own cultural heritage could not internalize the historical experience of others. The relation between tradition and modernity could only be understood by focusing first on the dynamics of tradition and then on current change stemming from the encounter with the West (Madan, 2011: 164–66). He accordingly opposed mythical reconstructions of the past, such as Gandhi’s *Rama-raja* (Kingdom of Rama) or Panchayati Raj (village republic), and insisted plural aspect of the Indian tradition as shaped by “Buddhism, Islam and Western commerce and culture” (cited in Madan, 2011: 160). At the same time, he opposed the uncritical application of dialectical materialism to India, proposing instead that “the study of Indian traditions ... should precede the socialist interpretation of changes in Indian traditions in terms of economic forces” (cited in Madan, 1995: 16). In other words, he thought the object of Indian sociology should be the study of the distinctive dynamics of the evolving Indian tradition. Mukerji was thus a forerunner of the project of an alternative Indian modernity.

Ashis Nandy implicitly subscribed to Mukerji’s conception of tradition and regarded his work as belonging to “the tradition of reinterpretation of tradition to create new traditions” (Nandy, 1983: xiii–xiv). This was in fact the way Gandhi had related to the Hindu tradition. In his restructuring of the Hindu tradition, Gandhi had brought marginal, low-status commercial and peasant elements to the fore, thus “making its cultural periphery its center.” To convert Hindus into a modern nation, Gandhi’s opponents from the Brahmin caste redefined Hinduism into a “religion along Semitic

lines,” while transforming its living traditions into a nationalist political ideology, Hindutva, which began its vigorous second life in the closing decades of the twentieth century (Nandy, 1995: 57–69).

Redfield’s notion of tradition as possessing a temporal structure and evolving through time has been independently discovered and drawn upon in the search for an alternative modernity outside of India as well. The contemporary rise of Islamic fundamentalism can thus be seen as a new stage in the evolution of the Islamic tradition. Talal Asad (2003: 222–48) thus conceives tradition independently of the invidious contrast with modernity, drawing on Koselleck’s idea that it has a temporal structure centered on the present, sees the Shari’a as “a traditional discipline.” “Islamists,”⁶ taking for granted and working through the nation-state, “relate themselves to the classical theological tradition by translating it into their contemporary political predicament” (Asad, 2003: 198). The proponents of Islam as a public religion in the 1960s and 1970s, drew on marginal elements and figures in the Islamic tradition to elaborate a model of “the Islamic state” as the basis of Islamic political ideologies political Islam. A more radically pluralistic conception both of “Islams and modernities” is found in *Islams and Modernities* by Aziz Al-Azmeh (1993).

The dialectic of tradition and modernity became the dominant theme in the public sphere in post-revolution Iran in the 1990s after the subsidence of Islamic ideology. The so-called “religious intellectuals” in the 1990s elaborated a critical theoretical framework for understanding the dialectic of tradition and modernity. The focus of this critical perspective was not on the transition from tradition to modernity but on the continuous tension between modernity and religion. In traveling from nineteenth-century European thought and, more immediately, the structural-functionalist sociology of post World War II to post-revolutionary Iran, the first term of the dichotomy – tradition – has lost the rigid fixedness attributed to it by classic eighteenth-century Enlightenment thought, and is seen in a fully dialectical relationship with modernity. Religious intellectuals were the architects of a critical theoretical framework for understanding the dialectic of tradition and modernity. As one would expect, the focus of this critical perspective is the tension between modernity and religion.

In the mid-1990s, the reformist periodical, *Kiān*, carried a series of articles on the debate on tradition and modernity, including a few by the leading religious intellectual, Abdol-Karim Soroush. On the path to development, Soroush observed, one should take advantage of traditions (*sonan*). Traditions are, however, both shackles and supports. One should both take refuge with them and seek liberation from them. The ethics of science and the ethics of wealth are two sets of constructive traditions, which we now need more than ever. It was, however, with the publication in 1996 of

Hermeneutics, the Book and Tradition by Mohammad Mojtahed-Shabestari that modern hermeneutics was brought to bear on the rethinking of Islam in the contemporary world. Noting that many observers insist that the concept of tradition (*sonnat*) and its derivatives have primarily a religious-doctrinal sense for the Muslims, he considered this insistence as the cause of “many difficulties and errors in the study of the problems of tradition, modernity and development in Islamic countries.” During Khatami’s election campaign in May 1997, the reformist journalist, Akbar Ganji, published a series of dialogues with Iranian intellectuals. These were entitled, “Tradition” (*sonnat*), “Modernity” (*modernité*), “Postmodern.” According to Ganji, the “postmodern” did not do too well in Iran, and tends to be identified with a group of so-called Heideggerian (some would say fascist) intellectuals. The postmodern trend originating in this group elaborated the jargon of Islamic authenticity as a remedy for what Jalal Al-e Ahmad had called Westoxification in the 1960s was a spent force. The dialectic of tradition and modernity, by contrast, remained vigorous and continued to excite the imagination of the Iranian intellectuals (Arjomand, 2009: Chapter 4).

In *A Critique of the Official Reading of Religion*, published in 2000, Shabestari defined the Islamic tradition hermeneutically and approached from the historical perspective of modernization. The key to the hermeneutic conception of Islam is that it is capable of different readings. Like all traditions, the Islamic tradition was capable of different readings in different periods of its long history. The current official reading (*qerā’at*) of Islam was thus historically contingent, and only one of its many possible readings. It was entirely possible, indeed imperative, to read Islam and its tradition in the context of modernity. Inspired by Mojtahed-Shabestari, the reformist President Mohammad Khatami, who saw the revivalists and reformists lost in the mayhem of “the struggle between tradition and modernity,” similarly considered “the new religious thinking” capable of bringing about a synthesis between tradition and traditional thought and the heritage of the modern world. As one dissident cleric and religious intellectual put it in 2000, a critical assessment of both tradition and modernity was necessary in order to combine “the relevant and valid elements of both tradition and modernity” in “designing a kind of indigenous (Iranian-Islamic) modernity” (cited in Arjomand, 2009: 86). In short, the search for an alternative modernity in post-revolutionary Iran has been through the dialectic of tradition and modernity.

The lesson drawn from the debate on tradition and modernity in India and Iran should perhaps be spelled out. Once we discard the Enlightenment caricature of Tradition as the non-reflexive and unchanging custom of the eternal yesterday to be shattered once and for all by the dynamic modernity of the age of Reason, tradition can be seen as a dynamic, intra-civilizational

process ongoing in various contemporary cultures and civilizations that compose the new axial civilization of modernity. Modernity as a European intra-civilizational process culminating in the Enlightenment set in motion the inter-civilizational processes of Westernization and modernization through the age of Western imperialist hegemony to the present, culminating in the multiple modernities of the global age.

Moving beyond civilizational processes mingling tradition and modernity, I have argued elsewhere that the greatest source of multiple modernities is the enormous diversity in the experience of building the modern nation-states. The selective adaptation and considerable transformation of the nation-state model generalized in the international system by the United Nations was inevitable because of the wide range of divergence of indigenous historical experiences from its premises of nationhood and statehood (Arjomand, 2010a). In this Chapter, I will turn to the sources of multiple modernities in the varied takes on civil society, the public sphere, and citizenship in different world regions.

Multiple Modernities in Varieties of Civil Society, and Public Spheres and Citizenship

Let me first survey briefly the varied understandings of civil society and the public sphere in contributions to theorizing worlds of difference in the third generation from the periphery. The collapse of Communism in Eastern and Central Europe had a major impact on social theory that spread from the metropolis to the periphery. Reinforced by subsequent theories of globalization, the result of this impact was to knock “nation” off the term “nation-state” and replace the concept with a dichotomy: state versus civil society. The striking fact of the close connection between the resurgent Polish nationalism and Catholicism and Russian nationalism and Orthodoxy notwithstanding, the attempts to insert “nation” and “church” between “state” and “civil society,” such as Casanova’s (1993), did not leave a mark on social theory. Civil society, by contrast, became a major theoretical concept for the first time. In its earlier life, the term “civil society” began as a philosophical analytical concept but acquired a pronounced normative dimension by the closing decades of the eighteenth century, becoming what Koselleck called a “movement concept” (*Bewegungsbegriff*) against absolutism, primarily, but also against tradition and corporatism (Kocka, 2005: 142). It was revived in the 1980s in Eastern and Central Europe very much as a movement concept, and it was as such that it was picked up in other parts of the world. As the concept of civil society was appropriated in different regions of the world, its different shades of meaning, conceptual inflections, and normative implications were brought to light and elaborated.

Jürgen Habermas (1989/1962) had taken a major step toward severing the close connection between the public and the state, as in such notions as “public law,” by claiming the public sphere for rational deliberation as a prerequisite for democratic governance. The rediscovery of civil society in the 1980s greatly enhanced the dissociation of the public sphere from the state. By firmly placing civil society as the “third sphere” between the state and the market in social theory, it linked the previously state-centered conception of citizenship to the triad of civil society, the public sphere and civil political participation (Somers, 2008). Yet in *Genealogies of Citizenship*, correctly presented by Margaret Somers (2008: 14) as “the logical maturation of comparative-historical sociology” (with reference to the above-mentioned American school that dislodged the modernization theory), she makes no effort to theorize the historical experiences of the non-Western regions of the world, especially concerning the right to recognition by ethnic groups and religious minorities.⁷

The post-revolutionary Iranian intellectuals were discomforted by a misfit between the metropolitan concept of civil society and their aspirations as early as in the 1990s. To be more precise, it was this third dimension of civil political participation that they found greatly underemphasized and anemic. Saïd Hajjarian, to take an important representative of the reform movement in the latter part of that decade, discovered that what they were after when talking about civil society was not so much the social sphere or social space, but an alternative avenue of civic political participation. This recognition came to the intellectuals leading the reform movement when President Khatami carried out the election of the local and municipal councils 20 years after they had been promised in the 1979 Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran. The reformists recognized the councils as a new space for self-government, independent of the state, and therefore more real than the much talked about civil society (Tajbakhsh, 2000: 380, 390–92). Hajjarian (736), alternately included the councils among the institutions of civil society or considered them “the foundation stone of republicanism.” In the 2000s, “Republicanism” gradually replaced “civil society” as a movement concept against clerical authoritarianism, labeled the “Islamicity” of the regime (Arjomand, 2009: Chapter 5). Tajbakhsh (2005), by contrast, retained the focus on civil society and conceived it more narrowly and apolitically as an autonomous public space. The result, in a study of production of knowledge in the Islamic Republic of Iran, was that he could find civil society only as a sphere of semi-autonomy “within the state.”

Alexander (2006: 31–36) is correct in emphasizing the deficiency of the eighteenth and nineteenth century concepts of civil society with regard to the deep cultural codes, distinctive regulative institutions and specific

historical practices of civility necessary to sustain it. Despite his recognition that the promise of civil society and its “aspiration to universalism” can only be redeemed by going beyond the territory of the nation-state and making “civil society into a major focus of empirical and theoretical thought” (Alexander, 2006: 36, 551), however, Alexander pays no attention whatever the way the non-Western world has sought to redeem the promise of civil society and thereby produced a variety of inflections in its conception. Surely Alexander’s purported universalist conceptualization of civil society as “a community of *individuals*, centered on solidarity of a distinctly civil kind” (2006: 551, emphasis added) and requiring a “differentiated sphere of justice” should be provincialized. It can be so altered in two directions, by being put in historical context, as done by myself (Arjomand, 2004c) and Budde (2003), and by being cross-culturally compared with the communal concepts of justice and group rights, as brought to the fore by the Indian experience described as follows.

Partha Chatterjee (1993: 233–34) is right in reading the “suppressed narrative of community” and therefore the nation as the legitimate political community into Hegel’s discussion of civil society, especially when Hegel likens it to “a universal family.” The historical importance of the family as the “core institution” of civil society in eighteenth-century Europe (Budde, 2003; Kocka, 2005: 146) can be taken as a useful point of departure for comparisons. I myself have found a variant of the Hegelian concept of civil society quite useful for historical analysis in the precise sense of a space for civic agency protected by the law and independent of government, and have used it to place a type of organization I call “the educational-philanthropic complex” in medieval Islam. These were foundations by members of the ruling dynasties and patrician families that were legally instituted and protected by the law of *waqf* against the patrimonial state (Arjomand, 1999). The same civic institutions, together with the guilds, were also examined in a period of the simultaneous spread of coffee-houses in the Ottoman and Safavid empires, and of the emergence of Oriental despotism as a movement concept in Europe. I brought in the coffeehouses to instantiate the public space aspect of the seventeenth-century civil society in the Ottoman and Safavid empires (Arjomand, 2004c).

Other studies on the distinctive features of the public sphere in Islam also made their appearance (Hoexter et al., 2002). Uğur Kömeçoğlu (2006) examined coffeehouses as the arena not of (Habermasian) rational discourse but of theater and of the (Bakhtinian) carnivalesque and subversive discourse. Had Habermas known this perspective from the periphery, he might have noted the amplitude of subversive discourse in the public space from the Carbonari to the Russian anarchists in

the cafés of nineteenth-century Europe. Armando Salvatore (2007) challenges Habermas's theory of the public space more systematically, thus provincializing its conception as the arena of rational communicative action, resting on the distinction between privacy and publicness, through comparisons with the Catholic and Islamic traditions. Salvatore draws on Vico to offer an alternative genealogy of the emergence of the public sphere in Western civilization, which attributes rationality to traditions of public discourse collectively with no allowance for inwardness and subjectivity, and goes much further back in history than Habermas's post-Protestant theory, which Salvatore equates with liberal modernity. In this genealogy, the normative ideal of a public sphere, far from being secular, is rooted in religious traditions. It is much more agonistic and pluralistic than Habermas's, and allows for the coexistence and conversation of several traditions.

The valorization of public religion throughout the Muslim world from the late nineteenth-century reform movement to the current resurgence of Islam, from Jamal al-Din Afghani to 'Ali Shari'ati in the 1960s and 1970s and 'Abdol-Karim Soroush at present (Ghamari-Tabrizi, 2004; Connell, 2007b: 381) contradicts a common variant of the secularization as privatization of religion which was more generally discarded by Casanova (1994). The explosion of politicized Islam beginning with the revolution of 1979 in Iran has rightly been taken as the clearest refutation of the secularization thesis. It is therefore intriguing that the proponents of Islam as a public religion in the decades since the revolution include reformists who have offered their contrasting ideas and justifications of secularism. Soroush has firmly rejected the idea of the Islamic state, putting forward an admittedly confused argument for "Islamic secularism" in terms of the inherent secularity of Islam (Ghamari-Tabrizi, 2008).

The evolution of Islam as a public religion in Indonesia has been more intricate, however. The late Indonesian thinker, Nurcholish Madjid, who died in 2005 formulated a more compelling argument for religious tolerance and pluralism within a secular state. He accepts the Five Principles (Panjasila) embodied in the Indonesian Constitution as fully compatible with the spirit of Islam, as neither the Koran nor Muhammad's so-called constitution of Medina specify the character of the state (Madjid, 1996; Bakti, 2005: 293). Already in the early 1970s, as a leader of the Islamic Students Association, Madjid recognized that the idea of the Islamic state was doubly apologetic: it was an apology in relation to modern ideologies which "gave rise to an ideological-political understanding of Islam," and it was an apology in relation to modern constitutional law to demonstrate that the Shari'a amounted to "laws and regulations that are superior to other laws" (Madjid, 1998: 293–94). The concept of "Islamic state,"

Madjid (1998: 294) concluded, “is a distortion of the [properly] proportioned relationship between state and religion.”⁸ Madjid succeeded in winning over the leaders of the two massive Islamic organizations, the Nahdlatul Ulama and the Muhammadiyah, who led the transition to democracy in Indonesia after Soeharto (Assyaukanie, 2004). The former, Abdurrahman Wahid, who advocated “Indonesia’s mild secularism” (Wahid, 2001), became the President of Indonesia in 1999. The latter, Amien Rais, who, like Madjid, had studied with a leading Islamic modernist in the late 1970s and early 1980s, in an interview, published in November 1982 under the title “The Islamic State Does Not Exist!” broke the ice in Indonesia political debate. Rais became the Speaker of the Indonesian parliament in 1998, and followed the model of pluralistic secular state when presiding over the amendment of the 1945 Constitution. During the process, in a book edited by Madjid in 2000, Rais confirmed that “Islamic state or *negara Islam*, I think, does not exist in the Qur’an as well as in the Sunnah. Therefore there is no desideratum in Islam to establish an Islamic state” (cited in Assyaukanie, 2004: 41).

The evolution of citizenship was closely connected to state formation and nation-building in the Western developmental pattern. In Bendix’s (1964) analysis of this connection, the European pattern was implicitly put forward as the universal one, as had been the case with Marshall’s (1950) concept of social citizenship reflecting the impact of the European welfare state. Somers’s more recent (2008) study of citizenship, despite considerable attention to the right to recognition as an extension of Marshall’s social right of citizenship, pays scant attention to the form this right takes on behalf of disprivileged ethnic groups and religious minorities in different regions of the periphery, or to the culturally specific demands of women’s movements there. Furthermore, the older connection between the state and citizenship issues remains critical in the non-Western world, and the affirmative role of the state there cannot be reduced to undoing the effect of what she calls “market fundamentalism,” is also ignored.

Marshall’s (1950) celebrated conception of the sequential development of the civil, the political and the social dimensions of citizenship in the modern (Western) state cannot be generalized as part of any de-historicized and purportedly universal modernization process but must be strictly provincialized by taking into account the experience of the non-Western world. Mahmood Mamdani takes an important step in that direction by underlining the “specificity of the African experience” and insisting on the “historical legitimacy of Africa as a unit of analysis” (Mamdani, 1996: 8, 13). In contrast to the legacy of imperialism in the form of the bifurcated state shaped by indirect rule, Marshall’s sequential pattern of development

along the three Western-derived dimensions is of no help for understanding post-colonial Africa. Mamdani brings to light the legal status and political disabilities of the vast majority of the African colonial subjects under indirect rule through the native authorities. As the authority of the native chiefs was absolute, combining judiciary and administrative powers, the subjects lacked the civil, political and social dimensions of citizenship alike. The African colonial legacy is shown by Mamdani to be highly pertinent to the character and failure attempts at reforming the structure of the bifurcated state after independence, and to patterns of urban and rural political action as well as the pervasiveness of ethnic rebellions. There are few better indicators of the disappearance of comparative sensibility from the current variant of American “historical and comparative sociology” than Somers’s failure to mention Mamdani’s book in her extensive bibliography.

Conclusion

I have argued that multiple modernities are the primary manifestation of what S.N. Eisenstadt called the new axial civilization of modernity. Multiple modernities stem from the diversity of axial civilizational processes. Differences in civilizational processes transforming tradition and religion, and developmental patterns producing alternative modernities, and varieties of conceptions of civil society, the public sphere and citizenship cannot be considered marginal in social theory. This list is selective, as is the range of historical experiences drawn upon in this chapter by no means globally comprehensive. Nevertheless, my illustrations should be sufficient for proving the fundamental relevance of the global periphery to Western-centered theorizing in comparative sociology, and for rectifying what Raewyn Connell calls the erasure of the historical experience of a very sizeable portion of humankind from the foundation of social theory.

My final question is this: Can we in the third generation of comparative sociologists succeed in realizing the promise of comparative sociology now that the periphery can speak for itself and does not have to be represented by metropolitan Orientalists and other area experts? In the new global republic of social theory, can the West and the rest mutually provincialize each other and their respective socio-historical experiences from a more genuinely universal horizon? Let me conclude by submitting that the idea of multiple modernities enables us to do so as the intellectual vanguard of the composite civilization of modernity.

Notes

- 1 Edward Tiryakian (1995), in turn, applies the concept to the epochal world transition in 1989.
- 2 Redfield was actively involved in the area studies from 1947 until his death in 1958, and his own project was supported by the Ford Foundation from 1951 to 1961.
- 3 For a fuller discussion of the first two generations, see Arjomand (2010a).
- 4 Stephen R. Graubard (Eisenstadt, 1972, 2000), the long time editor of *Dædalus* (*Journal of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences*), noted in his two prefaces, 28 years apart, that neither “post-traditional,” nor “multiple modernities” were terms in common use. The latter, as it turned out, was the one destined to gain currency.
- 5 “The architectonic principle strives toward consistency within the systems of meaning, normative orders and crafts, and at the same time, regulates the search through reflective judgment for an overall meaningful consistency across the theoretical, the moral and the technical domains” (Arjomand, 2004a: 252–53). This process can be depicted as a developmental process, as conceived by Weber, and be harnessed to the task of explaining civilizational diversity. The sociological process of value rationalization is analogous to the exercise of regulative judgment in the creation of the common sense, but the two are obviously not identical. The process therefore needs to be historicized, as the poetic judgment of meaningful consistency still leaves a very considerable space of indeterminacy in between its steps. This indeterminacy is filled by the struggle for the definition of social and political order that I call constitutional politics. The challenge, in short, is to specify the complex combination of logic, poetic judgment, political configurations, and historical contingency in this architectonic process of construction of meaning.
- 6 Asad reminds us that “to themselves they are simply proper Muslims.”
- 7 Her extensive bibliography of over 40 pages does not include Mamdani’s (1996) work to be discussed below.
- 8 Much more recently, Abdollahi An-Na`im (2008: 3) has shown the idea of ‘the Islamic state’ to be a product of postcolonial discourse based on “European notions of the state and positive law” in order to offer an Islamic justification of democracy.

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