Reshaping Civilization: Liberalism between assimilation and cultural genocide

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No civilization has been more deeply divided and self-contradictory than the one which invented democracy and fascism, parliament house and gas chamber. With its divided soul as well as its shallower national divisions, it may have been moving toward some kind of unity under the logic of its own inner development, but it was the contrast between itself and the outer world that enabled it most fully to recognize itself and what it had in common. (Kiernan 1995: 154)

Introduction

The 20th century has not been one for Occidentals to be proud of, when you think of the aspirations of Western liberals at its outset, the efforts directed at all manner of progress and improvement, and how much so many millions of people have ended up suffering, and continue to suffer, at each other’s hands. The management of violence in all its diverse forms is arguably a problem of similar significance in the year 2001 as it was in 1901 - or 1801, 1501. It could be said that it has simply become more complex and differentiated. In addition, since 10 November 1989, roughly, there has been a striking shift in the way Western nations, states and peoples reflect back on the normative dimensions of their past history. Concepts like >reparation=, >restitution= and >reconciliation= have taken on new resonances, and observers like Elazar Barkan (2000) remark on a new and growing collective desire, largely but not only among Occidentals, to rethink history in ways which redress a range of past injustices. The idea of >restorative justice= (Strang & Braithwaite 2001), then, is one which applies not only to contemporary problems such as the relationship between perpetrators and victims of crime, it also gets stretched across time to encompass historical injustices (Gordon 1996) which have come to be seen as such because their cognitive frames have shifted.

This normative rethinking of the past is, however, hotly contested, resulting from deep-seated disagreement about whether and how such conceptual reframing of history is to take place. The argument I would like to aim for here is that in order to work our way through these disputes intelligently, as well as addressing the fundamental issues underlying the experiences of historical injustice, it is important to engage - more systematically than we have so far - with our understanding of the idea of >civilization=. There seems to be little hesitation to mobilise varying conceptions of >barbarism= in reference to events, actions and forms of social...

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1 This is a sketch of elements of a larger work, titled Reshaping Civilization: Citizenship, Civility and Governance under Settler-Colonialism, and draws on two previous conference papers: >Governance, law and civilization= (1999) and >Welfare, Civilization, Governance: liberalism between assimilation and cultural genocide= (2000). The web site for the project as a whole is at: http://www.usyd.edu.au/su/social/robert/arc/arcframe.htm
organization we regard as immoral, unjust, cruel, inhumane or oppressive, but barbarism = implied converse, civilization, leads a much more troubled existence, especially among social and political theorists and researchers.

The normative and rhetorical power of the opposition between barbarism and civilization remains enormous, and civilization continues to be an important conceptual and rhetorical reference point, the focus of whatever we understand by progress = or, if that word offends, the point = of any human action on the social and political world. Since the post-1989 enthusiasm for civil society =, there has also been a movement in social and political thought towards an analysis of the processes by which societies become more or less civil =, and this has much to do with the current appeal of the idea of civilization. It is, however, precisely this normative usage of civilization which alerts us, makes us uneasy, and drives us to putting civilization = in inverted commas. The idea of the civilizing mission = is, as we all know very well, firmly rooted in the history of colonization and imperialism; as Norbert Elias wrote in 1939 It is not a little characteristic of the structure of Western society that the watchword of its colonizing movement is civilization = (1994: 509).

If we approach the period since 1989 as being related to the increasing success = of a particular model of society, politics and economics, in addition to analysing this development in terms of capitalism, liberalism, democracy or civil society, it is equally accurate to see in connection with a particular conception of civilization being promoted throughout the world along more or less the same lines as it has been pursued since the fourteenth century when Europeans began colonizing the world beyond Europe (Becker 1988; Woolf 1989; Conklin 1997). What we currently understand as globalization or the reinvigoration of civil society can thus be seen as entirely continuous with the Enlightenment mission of civilizing the world, the way in which we today perceive the barbarism = of the genocide in Rwanda, Kosovo and East Timor as intimately related to the way that Europeans understood the savagery = of American Indians in the eighteenth century.

Civilization thus seems to lead an extraordinary double life in Western social and political thought, at one and the same time an object of on-going critique and an organizing principle. A particularly useful example of the dynamics of this double life of civilization = is its operation at the outer margins of self-perceived civilization, at the points where those who understood themselves to be civilized met those they regarded as barbaric, uncivilized or yet-to-be civilized: in the colonial encounter. Australia is an especially important example because it constitutes, as it were, a limit case =: for those who saw civilization as a hierarchical and linear progression over time, the Australian Aborigines were regarded as lying at the very lowest point of that development, as having to travel the furthest possible distance in moving from tradition to modernity, from barbarism to civilization. In addition, as settler-colonists, European Australians have had to work on their relationship with Aboriginal people in a particularly enduring and on-going way: post-colonialism provides little relief for the settler-colonist.

One useful example of the role played by the idea of civilization in this context is the Mabo judgement,2 where Justice Brennan argued that a law which took from indigenous inhabitants any right to occupy their traditional land,

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2 Mabo and others v Queensland (No. 2) [1991-1992] 175 CLR 1
exposed them to deprivation of the religious, cultural and economic sustenance which the land provides, vested the land effectively in the control of the Imperial authorities without any right to compensation and made the indigenous inhabitants intruders in their own homes and mendicants for a place to live should be regarded as >unjust=, with a questionable claim to be part Australian common law, >judged by any civilized standards (pp. 28-9). A little further in the judgement, however, we are also reminded that >civilization= was precisely the concept underpinning the legal reasoning refusing an indigenous interest in land. It was, Brennan J remarks, >the supposedly barbarian nature of indigenous people [which] provided the common law of England with the justification for denying them their traditional rights and interests in land= (Williams 1990).

This same contrast can be seen in relation to the other issue taking a central place in European Australian=s rethinking of the history of their relations with Aboriginal people: the removal of Aboriginal children. Both the practice itself and the subsequent critique of that practice rely heavily on the concept of >civilization= to legitimate themselves. There was seen to be a sort of isomorphism between the approach to land and to family life; just as Aborigines were seen as bereft to rights to land because they did not cultivate it, and thus >uncivilized=, so too were they seen as bereft of rights to their own children, because they did not >cultivate= them into a form of civilization recognizable to Europeans (Dorsett 1995). Just as it was the duty of Europeans to cultivate the land to its maximum capacity, so too it was their duty to >cultivate=, educate Aboriginal children to their >maximum= capacity, that is, as assimilated and Europeanised. Civilized society is, in this usage, exactly what Aborigines are not part of, and it was this exclusion which supported the denial of their access to full citizenship, apparently leaving unchallenged the broader conceptions of egalitarianism and equity on which Australian national identity was supposed to rest. But, again, the critique of Aboriginal child removal which has emerged over recent decades also presents itself as informed by the appropriate degree of civility, and the earlier administrators and officials as characterized by a barbarism which current generations should condemn as an example of cultural genocide.

Talal Asad has pointed out that the changes associated with modernity have consistently involved >the reformation of subjectivities and the reorganization of social fields in which subjects act and are acted upon= (1992: 337), and this reformation of subjectivity constituted an >implantation= of >the desire for progress= based on the employment of >despotic powers - including, where necessary, violence (p. 339), political powers in turn organised around particular discursive strategies (Asad 1991: 324). As HV Evatt wrote in 1918, citing Henry Jones: We have attempted to justify the principles of Australian Liberalism and to show how >the spirit of man may find itself in the social order; man may be obedient and yet free, and the more obedient because he is free. The social authority may still be steadfast, and the more steadfast and imperative because it is rooted in the hearts of its subjects=. (Evatt 1918: 77)

The kinds of question that this paper addresses, then, include: What do the various policies and practices surrounding the removal of Indigenous children tell us about the inner workings of liberal rationalities of government, and what do changes in
those rationalities in turn tell us about our current retrospective understanding of those policies and practices? How can the history of Indigenous child removal illuminate both the peculiarities of governance under settler-colonialism and underlying features of liberal rationalities of government more generally?

**Liberal governance and Aboriginal children**

Looking back over the course of the twentieth century, it is clear that the term liberalism captures heterogeneous forms of political power and practices of government. For example, Tim Rowse identifies two variants or strands of Australian liberalism: the first treats all social identity, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, as an essentially individual phenomenon which has no significant connection with a broader cultural order. One could call it a liberalism with a weak sense of civil society, organised primarily around a relatively direct relationship between individual citizens and their nation-state. The other variant affords greater recognition to civil society and a realm of culture which mediates relationships between citizen and state, and it allows for the persistence of the Indigenous social order within a wider post-colonial social order (Rowse 1996). Elsewhere Rowse (1999) refers to the first as juridical liberalism, organised around the concern to construct essentially equal individuals, free of any other social bonds, in their relation to the state, and the second as a sociological liberalism, in which the social and cultural connectivity of individuals, their location within a range of communities is an equally important feature of their political identity.3

John Gray, in contrast, suggests that we should see liberalism as having two faces, depending on the understanding of toleration in relation the variety of ways of life that human beings pursue:

From one side, toleration is the pursuit of an ideal form of life. From the other, it is the search for terms of peace among different ways of life. In the former view, liberal institutions are seen as applications of universal principles. In the latter, they are a means to peaceful coexistence. In the first, liberalism is a prescription for a universal regime. In the second, it is a project of coexistence that can be pursued in many regimes.

He sees Locke, Kant, Rawls and Hayek, as exemplars of the former, the liberal project of a universal regime, and Hobbes, Hume, Berlin and Oakeshott as representing the latter, the liberalism of peaceful coexistence. James Tully (1995) develops a similar contrast between the empire of uniformity of modern constitutionalism, and the alternative of a responsiveness to variety and multiplicity, although he sees the former as having much more clearly dominated Western political thought, in contrast to Gray’s metaphor of liberalism’s two faces. This line of argument is similarly followed up in Will Kymlicka’s (1995) conception of multicultural citizenship, as well as Iris Marion Young’s (1989; 1990) critical analysis of the universalistic claims of liberal political thought.

Uday Mehta (1990) has also outlined the intimate internal bonds between liberalism’s theoretical claims to universalism and its actual practices of political exclusion based on a particular anthropology concerning what it means to be

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3 Rowse calls it sociological because of its roots in a Durkheimian view of social life.
Mehta speaks of a thicker set of social credentials that constitute the real bases of political exclusion (p. 429) and qualify, heavily, liberalism’s claimed universalism, generating its practical particularism and allowing the two to exist side by side without the contradiction causing too much unavoidable explicit embarrassment. Similarly both Parekh (1994) and Connolly (2000) point to JS Mill’s emphasis on the centrality of civilisation to the whole project of liberal governance. For Mill, writes Connolly, civilisation is an advanced mode of living and governance. Generally growing out of a Christian culture, it equips people with the discipline, character, disposition to regular obedience and appreciation for rule of law necessary to representative government (2000: 186). The relative merits of each of the two faces of liberalism also remains undecided, with the empire of uniformity striking back when the opportunity arises, as in Brian Barry’s (1996; 2000; 2001) critique of Young and Parekh.

One central theme in the development of this kind of argument about liberalism’s heterogeneity has been that of the contrast between liberalism’s universalistic theoretical claims and the practical exclusions, qualifications and restrictions of its real-existing political, legal and administrative regimes (Young 1989). In particular, an often hidden dimension to liberal citizenship and governance is the way in which they are generally qualified in terms of the differing degrees of civility displayed by those members of a liberal society hoping to enjoy the full range of its rights and entitlements, their differing capacities to meet the accompanying obligations (Pettit 1997: 241-70; Rose 1999: 71-8). The freedom which liberal political rationality promotes is a conditional one, accompanied by an equally strong concern with the production and maintenance of a configuration of shared norms, values, codes of conduct and rules of behaviour, pursued in the realms of social welfare, education, public health, psychology, psychiatry, counselling, religion, social work, the mass media, town planning and public architecture, all the activities characterizing what have been called civilizing offensives (van Krieken 1990).

If the liberal commitment to individual freedom, privacy and autonomy depends for its successful realisation on the parallel formation of behaviour and conduct according to a particular understanding of human welfare (Rose 1999: 48-9), this formation of conduct in turn rests on a certain anthropological minimum (Mehta 1990: 431). An important part of the story of liberal political rationality then becomes the securing of that anthropological minimum, a very particular kind of task in relation to Indigenous populations under settler-colonial conditions. The exclusion of Australian Indigenous peoples from citizenship was until only quite recently based on the extent to which particular norms of civility had or had not been achieved by particular individuals or groups - citizenship was not something to which anyone born in Australia was entitled, it was conditional on being able to demonstrate the requisite degree of civilization (Chesterman & Galligan 1997; Petersen & Sanders 1998). As Peterson and Sanders put it in relation to the Australian history of citizenship, even the missionaries who were committed to the concept of a

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4 See also Mariana Valverde’s (1996) discussion of the despotism at the heart of liberal thought, particularly J.S. Mill, Barry Hindess’s (1998) discussion of the politics of citizenship across national boundaries, as well as generally Philip Pettit (1997: 241-70) and Nikolas Rose (1999: 71-8); on inclusion and exclusion generally, see Goodin (1996).
shared humanity only regarded it as possible if these people acquired the cultural and social competencies of the colonisers and if difference was erased. Assimilation was thus essential to the possibility that Aboriginal people could redeem themselves and become citizens of the settler society.\(^5\)

John McCorquodale’s examination of Australian legislation, judicial reasoning and administrative practice also reveals a dichotomy based on blood by which those having Aboriginal or other coloured blood or strains of blood were singled out for special legislative treatment. Aborigines and half-castes, in particular, were subject to increasing refinement as legislative subjects in the several jurisdictions. A bewildering array of legal definitions led to inconsistent legal treatment and arbitrary, unpredictable, and capricious administrative treatment. He goes on to suggest that the birth of a supposedly free, liberal and democratic nation... was therefore attended by illiberal sentiment, legislative prescriptions, and denial of basic democratic rights and freedoms solely on the ground of racial antecedents or association. The whole post-1945 assimilatory project of Australian liberalism thus has to be seen as layered on top of this essentially illiberal foundation, a civilizing mission designed to bring both Indigenous and migrant Australians within a particular frame of civility, in order to render them proper and governable citizens.

Those collective self-images, and the boundaries drawn around colonizers and colonized, were to a large extent organized around the concept of civilization. Liberal universalism is articulated with the ‘filter’ of civilization so that the freedoms, rights and liberties of liberal citizenship are made conditional on assimilation, on acceptance into the forms of civility recognized by various, sometimes competing, authorities: Church, state, local communities, schools and welfare agencies. Civilization constitutes both the criteria for exclusion from liberalism’s freedoms, rights and liberties, and the reference point for those on-going projects aimed at the assimilatory (re)shaping of conduct so as to permit eventual re-entry into civilization and its attendant identity as a free liberal agent, a modern citizen.

The application of a range of strategies of intervention to Indigenous children as the solution to the problem posed by the Aboriginal population to European Australian social life is a particularly important example of the way in which welfare and freedom are organized under liberalism around the selective application of force, violence and deprivation of liberty. The ways in which this articulation of freedom with coercion has been reconfigured over time is also important in understanding the nature of political and social life under contemporary liberalism. The primary and overarching concern of the assertion of legal guardianship by the state over all indigenous children was to solve the half-caste problem by breeding out the colour of both body and mind through a program of social engineering; in this sense the removal of Aboriginal children meshed with the other, accompanying, strategy of controlling sexual relations and reproduction among adult Aborigines. This was certainly the most strongly

\(^5\) See Wells and Christie (2000) and Namatjira v Raabe (1959) 100 CLR 664 for just one example of how such conditional citizenship practices worked. In relation to American Indians, see Fitzpatrick (1995).
articulated argument in the writings of the politicians, administrators and anthropologists central to the development of the various forms of legislative and administrative action. Merging, absorption and assimilation into the ways of civilization were the key concepts around which this discourse was organized. In 1936 a conference of the leading authorities in Aboriginal affairs declared its belief that the destiny of the natives of aboriginal origin, but not of full blood, lies in their ultimate absorption by the people of the Commonwealth (Commonwealth of Australia 1937: 3). By the 1950s this kind of conception had been replaced by one more organized around the idea of citizenship, and in 1950 Paul Hasluck told the House of Representatives that Their future lies in association with us, and they must either associate with us on standards that will give them full opportunity to live worthily and happily or be reduced to the social status of pariahs and outcasts living without a firm place in the community (1953: 6).

Within this second conception of citizenship as assimilation, it was also possible to regard the state’s and church’s intervention into Aboriginal family life as advancing the welfare of the Aboriginal population as a whole, by posing a stark and uncompromising contrast between membership of the European community, on its terms, and exclusion from civilization itself. Aboriginal culture and its way of life, especially once it had encountered European civilization, was presented by Hasluck and almost every other administrator in Aboriginal affairs as inherently flawed, fragile and basically worthless, producing only illness, disease, drunkenness, filth and degeneracy in the thousands of degraded and depressed people who crouch on rubbish heaps throughout the whole of this continent (1953: 9; see also Read 1983: 20). Aboriginality was constructed simply as a primitive social order composed of ritual murders, infanticide, ceremonial wife exchange, polygamy (1956: 2), so that for Hasluck and most white Australians, the permanent elimination of Aboriginality from the fabric of Australian social life was self-evidently synonymous with civilization and progress itself, a crucial element of the truth that the blessings of civilization are worth having. We recognise now, said Hasluck, that the noble savage can benefit from measures taken to improve his health and his nutrition, to teach him better cultivation, and to lead him in civilised ways of life.... We know that the idea of progress, once so easily derided, has the germ of truth in it (1953: 17).

The destruction of Aboriginal culture and society, both inexorable and planned, via the assimilation of Aborigines as individuals and as children, was thus posed in terms of a humanitarian concern for the welfare of indigenous Australians, and this interpretation is still an important element of the common sense understanding of the practice of forced child removal. The categories welfare and genocide are generally treated as mutually exclusive, so that one can only argue for one by completely denying the validity of the other. However, it may be more useful to see these two categories as overlapping rather than as opposing each other, so that in fact there is nothing to prevent the pursuit of welfare to simultaneously...
be comprehensible as genocidal, and then to reflect on the implications of this overlap for our approach to government and welfare under liberalism more generally.

Up until the late 19th century, the dominant conception of the future of the Aborigines in Australia was that they were a dying race (Bates 1944; Brantlinger 1995) and that the primary focus of organised attention to them as a population group would be to protect them in the period of their final decline (McGregor 1997). Hasluck observed that although British policy makers and Australian administrators had started off with a concern to civilize the Aborigines and incorporate them into the Australian social life as a whole, by the late 19th century these grand ideas had given place to a less optimistic policy - a policy which had more in common with the aims of the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals than with the declarations of King Charles II in 1670 or of the House of Commons Select Committee of 1836-37 (1942: 68). The concepts underlying administration of the Aboriginal population had declined, wrote Hasluck, from an attempt at planning their transition from savagery to civilization to a process of pacification followed by an imperfect relief of the physical distress of the remnant (p. 120), and his concern was then to reinstate the project of civilizing the Aborigines, as something to which they should be seen as having a right as British subjects.

However, as Australian settler-colonialism advanced across the continent over the course of the 19th century, appropriating more and more land, Europeans came into increasing proximity to those Indigenous people they did not simply kill (Barta 1987; Moses 2000); with proximity comes intimacy, and with intimacy comes sex and babies. The effect of this sexual contact between Indigenous women and non-Indigenous men was to radically transform the nature of the relationship between colonisers and colonised, especially the European smugness about the inevitable disappearance of the Aboriginal race. White administrators became increasingly anxious about the menacing half-caste problem, the growing numbers of the pie-bald specimens we meet roaming about the country at present, and much more interested in bio-politics.

Around the turn of the century administrators were referred to the problem of half-castes, quadroons, and octoroons as one that none of the Australian colonies have ever attempted to settle, and yet is has been long in serious need of some satisfactory solution, but the problem was posed largely in general terms about the dangers of a pauper class and the apparently unsettling mixture of European and Aboriginal physical features in part-Aboriginal children. From about the 1910s onwards, however, those same administrators began to note a quantitative change: in 1911, for example, the NSW Aborigines Protection Board noted the alarming rapidity of the increase in part-Aboriginal children. By 1936, Paul Hasluck was writing articles for the West Australian with headlines like HALF-

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7. Dr Roth=s Progress Report, November, 1900, Office of the Northern Protector of Aboriginals, Cooktown, 5 December 1900, QSA A/58912
8. Letter to the Under Secretary, Public Lands, from A. Meston, Protector of Aboriginals, South and Central Queensland, Brisbane, 7 July 1900, NAA A58929 B Lands Department Batch Files 1903 No. 10438
CASTE PROBLEM. BIG RISE IN NUMBERS - Camps Swarming with Children

(Native Welfare Council 1939: 1-6). In 1901, we were told, there were 951 half-castes in Western Australia, in 1935 there were 4,245; in 1901 one in two hundred people were half-castes, in 1935 one in every hundred. In prose reminiscent of the Victorian accounts of slum-dwellers and the dangerous classes, Hasluck wrote:

In the Great Southern district half-caste families of eight, nine and ten and up to 14 children are the usual thing. There is one family of 20. At Narrogin there is one man, said to be about 65 years of age, who claims to have 120 descendants living. In one camp I saw a mother who, only five years after her first conception, was expecting her sixth child. All had been single births. Children swarmed in the huts and around the camping grounds - unwashed children badly in need of handkerchiefs. Women could be seen nursing one infant and well advanced towards another. Those were typical sights. (Native Welfare Council 1939: 1)

Hasluck noted that the half-caste population had increased four-fold over a single generation, and suggested that if this rate of increase continued, the State needs to make its plans for a large body of coloured people...who, as they are treated at present, have no place in the community into which they can fit, no chance to be anything but hangers-on.

The Northern Territory Chief Protector, Cecil Cook, had also done his sums, and he was equally alarmed; the white population was declining, whereas the annual increase of the half-caste population was 1.8 per cent, so that it was only a matter of a few years before the half-caste population will approximate that of the white population. The situation would become untenable, and Cook mused on the possibility of open revolt, let alone ongoing racial conflict (Commonwealth of Australia 1937: 13). Unless the black population is speedily absorbed into the white, threatened Cook, the process will soon be reversed, and in 50 years, or a little later, the white population of the Northern Territory will be absorbed into the black.

The evidence in the recent Cubillo/Gunner case supporting the concept of a general removal policy disregarding the child=s interests and welfare included the fact that familial consent to removal was sought but not required, and the simple presumption, from the highest policy level of the Minister down to individual Patrol Officers, that the mere fact of part-Aboriginality dictated that it was in the child=s best interest that they be removed.

The roots of the obviousness of the removal of part-Aboriginal children were two-fold: on the one hand, there was the presumption that whatever constituted a specifically Aboriginal cultural identity was doomed to extinction, indeed it deserved no better fate:

The superiority of Western civilization, both on its own merit and in its established position as the way of life of the vast majority - indeed the incompatibility of civilized usage and pagan barbarism - left only two possible outcomes: separate development or assimilation. Separate development was

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10 Cubillo & Another v Commonwealth (1999) 89 FCR 528 at 88, 95.
11 Id at 86.
12 Id at 91.
rejected except as required for the protection of a dying remnant. For the future there must be opportunity and encouragement for the coming generations of aboriginal people to become like all other Australians. The most hopeful future - or, in the view of others, the highest future - for the Aborigines was to become civilized and Christian (Hasluck 1988: 8).

Hasluck had a cute habit of speaking in the third person, but it would not be foolish to wager that he was referring to his own beliefs when he said that there was little doubt about the superiority of Western civilization, predominantly Christian in its scale of values, over the uncivilized usages of the pagan Australian Aborigines, nor that the Western interpretation of the nature of existence was more cogent than the beliefs of people who appeared to have no knowledge of modern geography, biology or astronomy and consequently were less qualified than we were to form views about the universe (1988: 8).

On the other hand, there was the threatening image of the half-caste as a representative of a dangerous and disgusting racial hybridity. Liberal social and political thought also rests on a delicate balance between individual rights and some conception of the social, or the particular and the universal, making it possible for civilisation and modernity to have barbaric effects to the extent that this balance takes particular forms. This is what is striking about the sheer disgust which European Australians have tended to feel for Aborigines (Read 1983: 20). The picture drawn of Aborigines generally was occasionally lightened by conceptions of the noble savage and optimism about the capacity for improvement and civilization, but revulsion and repugnance remained central elements of the emotional response to those pie-bald specimens who crossed racial boundaries. Again, Hasluck provides a useful example. In Black Australians he wrote that if one examines the attitudes of whites to Aborigines throughout Australian history, the first element to be noted is physical repugnance.

Some, but not all, white people were distressed by the difference in colour, odour, cast of countenance and personal habit of the aborigines. The degree and extent of this repugnance may be expected to grow as settlement progresses and disease, bad feeding, the greater dirtiness resulting from inactivity and a mongrel-dog existence in the rubbish heaps of towns, suffering and loss of self-respect make the detribalized natives of later years less lovely to look at than the primitive savage. Later generations see a debased remnant and physical disgust is not tempered by admiration of the prowess of the hunter and bushman...It may seriously be asked whether a great deal of latter-day missionary and ameliorative effort among aborigines is not founded on pity, based on physical repugnance, rather than on a respect for the black man or a faith in his dignity as a human being. (Hasluck 1942: 167-9)

Hasluck presented his analysis as if it consisted of detached, neutral observations on how others felt, but the emotional force of his prose is a little too strong, somewhat too heart-felt, and when one considers his other writings, it is clear that he was

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13 Dr Roth’s Progress Report, November, 1900, Office of the Northern Protector of Aboriginals, Cooktown, 5 December 1900, QSA A/58912.
describing his own feelings. In any case, it remained true for Hasluck that the basic essentials of social acceptability in a free and democratic society (especially in the idealistic visions we had of a better Australia) and the standards of conformity were mostly matters of habit and behaviour (1988: 23).

The presence of children with European features among Aborigines provided a clear focus for this revulsion, and an avenue of action to rescue the civilization which those children bore in their physical features from descent into barbarism and moral depravity. For all the Aboriginal Protectors, missionaries, police and patrol officers, it was self-evident that white-skinned, blue-eyed blonde or red-haired part-Aboriginal children were automatically to be removed from life among Aboriginals.

> It was, wrote Long, repugnant to see an almost white child living among the Aboriginals and this was reason enough to remove the child (Long 1967: 196). This repugnance and revulsion was based on a particular European habitus or understanding of habit, concepts which refer to the durable and generalized disposition that suffuses a person’s action throughout an entire domain of life or, in the extreme instance, throughout all of life - in which case the term comes to mean the whole manner, turn, cast, or mold of the personality (Camic 1986: 1046). Elias (1994) called it second nature. The European habitus (which Europeans themselves simply equate with civilization) was and continues to be organised around a particular type of self-restraint as well as management of the body and the emotions: questions of hygiene, bodily smell, cleanliness, diet, dress, literacy, approaches to work, settled living, adherence to Christianity, marriage, tolerance for alcohol, even the existence of a central political authority, which was said to underpin the rights attached to civilization and, above all, a white skin. An example of the physical ordinariness of the requirements of European civilization can be seen in the Government booklet published in 1961, under the heading What can be done, sub-headed Social Behaviour:

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14 For example, in 1955 Hasluck told the House of Representatives that we have to give attention to hygiene. So long as natives are not living in a way that makes them physically acceptable - to put it crudely, so long as natives live in a way that makes them smell - then there is no hope for them. We have to improve their hygiene in order to make them acceptable (Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates 8(New Series) 21st(1st) 6 October 1955, p. 1333).

15 As one contemporary observer wrote: At times one is startled to find, in a black’s camp, children with white skins and golden hair...It seems particularly painful that these children should be growing up to the life of the camps - in a word, white savages (JR Love The Aborigines: Their Present Condition Melbourne 1915: 21 cited in Markus 1990: 22). Lest we think this is a particularly Australian phenomenon, we can note the example of Cambridge historian Charles Kingsley’s observations, in a letter to his wife, on his visit to Ireland in July, 1860: But I am haunted by the human chimpanzees I saw along that hundred miles of horrible country. I don’t believe they are our fault. I believe there are not only many more of them than of old, but they are happier, better, more comfortably fed and lodged under our rule than they ever were. But to see white chimpanzees is dreadful; if they were black, one would not feel it so much, but their skins, except where tanned by exposure, are as white as ours (Curtis 1968: 84).

16 In the Hasluck papers in the National Library of Australia, there is a draft of a report by an Inter-Departmental committee on Matters Affecting Native Welfare, where the following recommendation That any aboriginal who has reached a standard of general education which makes his attendance at a secondary school advisable should be admitted to a State secondary school has added to it, in Hasluck’s writing, the following emendation: provided that his standard of personal hygiene and mode of life make him acceptable (NLA MS 5274 Hasluck Papers, Box 32).
A difficult, perhaps embarrassing, but essential activity is to educate aborigines in the fundamentals of social behaviour to ensure their full acceptance into the community at large. As well as in health and hygiene, this includes guidance in respect of such widely-separated matters as diet, budgeting the household income, planning and provision for the future, spiritual comfort, and the proper enjoyment of leisure. (Minister for Territories 1961: 23)

The European attitude towards Aboriginal people was an emotional and visceral response to physical and cultural difference as much as, of not more than, a rational, considered one or a functional necessity (Elias 1994: 509), that had the effect of sweeping away those considerations for people=s feelings and rights as human beings reserved for >people like us= - the de-humanizing, dis-identification (de Swaan 1997) that made it possible for administrators to put aside, with varying degrees of regret, their sentimentality about mother-child bonds. The racial, cultural and civilizational hybridity of part-Aborigines seemed to threaten the existence of civilization itself, and wherever civilization is felt to be endangered, even for liberals with powerful ethical concerns for human rights and welfare, all bets are off.

Towards reflexive civilization

If civil society is seen as the source or foundation of the project of civilising the state, it is important to recall civil society=s own sources and foundations, and this endeavour can often lead one full circle back to the state. Civil society is not something Anatural=, but produced and developed, the subjects of civil society being the targets, since the sixteenth century, of a range of disciplinary and governmental strategies designed to produce them as appropriate citizens, rather than simply taking them, and whatever social forms they generate, as they are. The whole history of civil society and the state since Adam Ferguson has been that of a partnership, albeit one with up and downs, rather than a war of opposites. In addition, the field of law lies at the heart of this production of civil society as a realm of relative individual and communal freedom separate from the state. The distinction made in jurisprudence between civilized and barbaric societies has always been centred on the rule of law, on the existence of a system of abstract, rule-governed restraints on the exercise of violence and force, the rules of which have an existence of their own independent of whichever individuals or groups happen to dominate at any particular time - a government of laws, not of men. To the extent that civil society concerns the restraint of violence and power, law has played a central role, especially in civilizing the state (originally, civilizing the King). Indeed, the construction and defence of the boundaries between civil society and the state is a large part of law=s concern, and a society without a rule of law is one with no distinction between state and civil society.

Lucien Febvre suggested that it is possible to identify two main ways in which concept civilization= is used. It can have an ethnomorphic meaning, referring simply to a way of life, a particular assembly of cultural, moral, political and economic forms. In this sense it is interchangeable with culture= or society=, and is of little analytic utility. Let us call this civilization1. However, the concept of civilization is also used to legitimate the idea of the rule of law in a more general sense, particularly in constitutionalism and the separation of powers idea, as
Operatively central to civilization, particular the restraint of violence and power, as it is to liberalism. What characterizes both civilization and the rule of law is the embedding of the exercise of power in impersonal rules and structures, rather than in the unregulated will of dominant individuals and groups, a government of laws, not of men. However, the form taken by individual subjectivity still plays a central and particular role in determining the operation of different modes of government and law. For David Hume, it was the application of human effort to practical, productive labour which would achieve this effect:

Laws, order, police, discipline; these can never be carried to any degree of perfection, before human reason has refined itself by exercise, and by an application to more vulgar arts, at least, of commerce and manufacture. Can we expect, that a government will be well modelled by a people, who know not how to make a spinning wheel, or to employ a loom to advantage? (1987: 273)

A central focus of Western political theory has been to argue that human beings are not born reasonable, and that some process of cultivation, refinement, education or formation of public reason - let us call it civilization - is a crucial dimension of a peaceful and productive civil society. Bauman thus argues that the project of civilization was centrally about the production of governable subjects:

the concept of civilisation 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 - local, tradition-bound ways of life and patterns of cohabitation. It denoted above all else a novel, active stance taken towards social processes previously left to their own resources, and a presence of concentrated social powers sufficient to translate such a stance into effective practical measures. In its specific form, the concept of civilisation also conveyed a choice of strategy for the centralized management of social processes: it was to be a knowledge-led management, and management aimed above all at the administration of individual minds and bodies. (1987: 93)

Until the early 1700s, suggests Lucien Febvre, the concept of police had been regarded as most central to superior government, and cites Furetière referring in 1690 to police, laws, systems of conduct to be observed for the subsistence and government of states in general, in opposition to barbarity = (1998: 166), the defining feature of savage societies was their lack of laws and a concept of police. However, in the course of the eighteenth century, there was additional concern for a concept which grasped the triumph and spread of reason not only in the constitutional, political and administrative field but also in the moral, religious and intellectual field = (1998: 167), with the second effectively absorbing the first, and this concept became civiliser.

By the end of the eighteenth century, it was civilization which represented the form of human perfectability to which European societies drove both their own populations and as much of the rest of the world as they could lay their hands on (Woolf 1989). In this second usage, wrote Febvre,

when we are talking about the progress, failures, greatness and weakness of civilization we do have a value judgment in mind. We have the idea that the civilization we are talking about - ours - is in itself something great and beautiful; something too which is nobler, more comfortable and better, both morally and materially speaking, than anything outside it - savagery,
barbarity or semi-civilization. Finally, we are confident that such civilization, in which we participate, which we propagate, benefit and popularize, bestows on us all a certain value, prestige and dignity. For it is a collective asset enjoyed by all civilized societies. It is also an individual privilege which each of us proudly boasts that he possesses. (1998: 161)

This, civilization\textsuperscript{2}, can be described as a subjective sense of civilization, in that it captures the self-understanding of the civilized person.

However, we can add a third consideration which approaches a more objective understanding of those social and political conditions, practices, strategies and figurations which produce whatever ends up being called civilization, founded on a reflexively critical awareness of the way in which particular conceptions and experiences of >being civil< get constructed and produced in one way or another. This, civilization\textsuperscript{3}, was the concern of the German sociologist Norbert Elias.

By the end of the eighteenth century, wrote Elias, civilization had come to be defined by Europeans >simply as an expression of their own high gifts< (1994: 41). It became a crucial part of Europeans' sense of superiority over all other peoples in the world: >the consciousness of their own superiority, the consciousness of this civilization, from now on serves at least those nations which have become colonial conquerors, and therefore a kind of upper class to large sections of the non-European world, as a justification of their rule= (1994: 41).

However, Elias also felt that there was more that could be said. He believed that what we experience as >civilization< is founded on a particular habitus, a particular psychic structure which has changed over time, and which can only be understood in connection with changes in the forms taken by broader social relationships. Elias insisted that >the molding of instinctual life, including its compulsive features, is a function of social interdependencies that persist throughout life=, and these interdependencies change as the structure of society changes. >To the variation in this structure correspond, wrote Elias, >the differences in personality structure that can be observed in history= (1994: 249). The first point was explored by Elias in relation to the successive editions of a variety of etiquette manuals, and the second in relation to the history of state formation in Britain, France and Germany.

As time went by, he found that the standards applied to violence, sexual behaviour, bodily functions, eating habits, table manners and forms of speech became gradually more sophisticated, with an increasing threshold of shame, embarrassment and repugnance. Gradually more and more aspects of human behaviour become regarded as >distasteful=, and >the distasteful is removed behind the scenes of social life=. Again and again, wrote Elias, we see >how characteristic is this movement of segregation, this hiding >behind the scenes= of what has become distasteful= (1994: 99). For example, a French etiquette manual from 1672 suggested that in the past, >one was allowed to take from one=s mouth what one could not eat and drop it on the floor, providing it was done skilfully. Now that would be disgusting= (1994: 76).

Elias described medieval society as being characterised generally by >a lesser degree of social control and constraint of instinctual life= (1994: 159), in particular by a violence which dominated everyday life and was rarely subject to much social or self-control. It was the social process of >courtization= which subjected first knights and warriors, and then ever-expanding circles of the population (1994: 88), to an
increasing demand that expressions of violence be regulated, that emotions and impulses be placed more firmly in the service of the long-term requirements of complex networks of social interaction. Slowly and gradually, argued Elias, the code of behaviour becomes stricter and the degree of consideration expected of others becomes greater, and the social imperative not to offend others becomes more binding (1994: 64). In court society we see the beginnings of a form of mutual and self-observation which Elias referred to as a psychological form of perception (1994: 63).\textsuperscript{17}

The result was a particular kind of habitus or second nature, an automatic self-restraint, a habit that, within certain limits, also functions when a person is alone (1994: 113). Elias argued that the restraint imposed by increasingly differentiated and complex networks of social relations became increasingly internalized, and less dependent on its maintenance by external social institutions, developing what Freud was to recognize as a super-ego (1994: 154).

The second volume of \textit{The Civilizing Process} dealt with the explanation of the transformation of psychic structure revealed by the etiquette books and other historical evidence. When enquiring into social processes, he wrote one must look at the web of human relationships, at society itself, to find the compulsions that keep them in motion, and give them their particular form and their particular direction (1994: 288).

Among those changes in the web of human relationships there was, first, the process of state-formation, and within it the advancing centralization of society (1994: 269), especially as it was expressed in the absolutist states of seventeenth and eighteenth century Europe. Second, he stressed the gradual differentiation of society, the increasing range, diversity and interdependence of competing social positions and functions composing European societies. There were other, related changes which he also mentioned, such as the development of a money economy and urbanization, but it was these two processes of social development which he emphasised most (1994: 457).

The state-formation process in Europe was accompanied, necessarily, by an increasing monopolization of the means of violence, and a pressure towards other means of exercising power in social relations. Rather than the use of violence, social success became more and more dependent on continuous reflection, foresight, and calculation, self-control, precise and articulate regulation of one’s own affects, knowledge of the whole terrain, human and non-human, in which one acts (1994: 476). Elias argued that this rationalization of human conduct, its placement at the service of long-term goals and the increasing internalization of social constraint was closely tied to the process of state formation and development of monopolies of physical force (1994: 447). The requirement placed on each individual is not a direct one, but one mediated by one’s own reflection on the consequences of differing patterns of behaviour (1994: 450).

Underlying the processes of state-formation and nation-building were also

\textsuperscript{17} Elias did not see courts as the cause or driving force of this process, but as its nucleus, and he drew a parallel with the form taken by a chemical process like crystallization, in which a liquid...[being] subjected to conditions of chemical change.....first takes on crystalline form at a small nucleus, while the rest then gradually crystallized around this core (1994: 95).
others of increasing social differentiation, increasing density, complexity, and what Elias called lengthening chains of social interdependence=(1994: 448). A central developmental process in European societies was their increasing density, produced by a combination of population growth and urbanization, and the ever-larger circles of people that any single individual would be interdependent with, no matter how fleetingly.

He spoke of the conveyor belts running through individuals lives growing longer and more complex=(1994: 452), requiring us to attune our conduct to the actions of others (1994: 445), and becoming the dominant influence on our existence, so that we are less prisoners of our passions and more captive to the requirements of an increasingly complex web of actions (1994: 445), particularly a demand for constant hindsight and foresight in interpreting the actions and intentions of others (1994: 456). Just as important as the length of chains of interdependence was the increasing ambivalence of overlapping and multiple networks: as social relations become more complex and contradictory, the same people or groups could be friends, allies or partners in one context and opponents, competitors or enemies in another. This fundamental ambivalence of interests, wrote Elias, is one of the most important structural characteristics of more highly developed societies, and a chief factor moulding civilized conduct (1994: 395).

All of these processes of civilization tend to produce a transformation of the whole drive and affect economy in the direction of a more continuous, stable and even regulation of drives and affects in all areas of conduct, in all sectors of his life (1994: 452). We are all compelled more and more to regulate our conduct in an increasingly differentiated, more even and more stable manner. Elias referred to this increasing self-regulation as a process of psychologization and rationalization, because it revolved around the growing reflexive understanding of our own actions, those of others, their interrelationships and their consequences. The web of actions grows so complex and extensive, wrote Elias, and the effort required to behave correctly within it becomes so great, that beside the individual s conscious self-control an automatic, blindly functioning apparatus of self-control is firmly established (1994: 455-6).

Elias s linkage of the historical formation of subjectivity with state formation, as well as more general processes of social development, constitutes a conceptual basis for analysing the civilizing mission itself, using his approach to processes of civilization to analyse what was self-understood as civilization. The normative assessment of peoples constructed as uncivilized barbarians can then be seen to be rooted in the psychic, social and political dynamics of civilizing processes themselves, the negative image of the savage being a projection of the civilized person s own feared internal barbarism, at either the individual or collective level. As Victor Kiernan has put it:

Underlying the antithesis of civilization and barbarism was that of mind and body. Reacting against the debased native, the European was in part reacting against his own baser self. It has been noticed how ready the white man often is to invest the black man with all the worst impulses he is conscious of in himself. Skin color disturbs us, perhaps, because its unfamiliarity forces us into awareness of the physical self that we would prefer to forget, and among
people resembling ourselves can forget (1995: 159). An understanding of civilization in Elias’s sense also makes it possible to see the civilizing mission as itself subject to processes of civilization: the way we civilize (Kidd 1997) can itself be seen as more or less civilized, more or less barbaric, in the sense of being more or less organized around restraint of emotion and visceral responses, a greater or less responsiveness of lengthening chains of social interdependency, to the long-term implications of individual actions and organized interventions. There is no reason to deny that our utilisation of Elias’s ideas should still proceed on a thoroughly critical basis (van Krieken 1999), but they none the less constitute an important step towards a critically reflexive understanding of civilization which can usefully illuminate the ways in which we attempt to engage with both the historical and current injustices characterizing the institutions and practices of liberal governance.

Conclusion: from assimilation to cultural genocide

Zygmunt Bauman has identified the more generalizable features of what he calls the assimilatory project within European state formation, and the centrality of that project to the very nature of the modern state. It was part and parcel of the process of dismantling older, deeply rooted forms of communal life which provided alternative, sometimes oppositions frameworks of social power. Assimilation, he suggests, was an exercise in discrediting and disempowering the potentially competitive, communal or corporative sources of social authority (1991: 106). As part of the liberal political and legal program to secure the modern state’s monopoly of law-making and coercion (p. 111), assimilation was organized around a tolerance of individuals based on a profound intolerance of differing collective cultural identities, so that tolerant treatment of individuals was inextricably linked to intolerance aimed at collectivities, their ways of life, their values and, above all, their value-legitimating powers (p. 107). The price to be paid by individuals for entry to liberal citizenship in the modern state, at least in its juridical form, has always been to leave all their previous communal cultural identities behind, apart perhaps from some remnant in the form of quaint customs wheeled out at ceremonial occasions.

Hasluck captured this element of this strand of liberal thought nicely in his critique of the notion of integration as an alternative to assimilation, when he declared that the loss of any valid and distinctive aboriginal culture is certain in the course of time.

The ancient pride can remain - and in fact may grow. Those people of Scottish ancestry who delight in strange capers at Hallowe’en, and those people of Irish origin who whenever they do something fine exclaim ‘It must be my Irish blood’ are examples of the sort of cultural pride I had in mind. But how real are the bagpipes and the kilts and the poetry of Burns as a cultural force in Australia? The Scot and the Irish and the English are assimilated, not integrated into Australian life. I look to a future when a person whose great grandfather was an Australian aboriginal will be as proud of the fact as a Scot is rightly proud of his barbaric ancestry (Hasluck 1959: 15).

18 One can this dynamic at work in the discussions of the character of the half-caste, which was often constructed as being constituted by the worst vices of both races.
The argument for a distinctive cultural identity he dismissed as so much romanticism, such as is expressed in the Moomba Festival in Melbourne, in the vogue of the Central Australian paintings and in the sale of factory-made koala bears and boomerangs (1959: 15).

However, liberal models of individual rights can never, on the one hand, really detach themselves from an accompanying conception of society as a whole to which individuals are to be assimilated. Indeed, the rhetoric of liberal democracy tends to draw attention away from the models of society and community which are in fact being drawn upon, making their problematic effects that much harder to perceive, let alone respond to. On the other hand, when combined with an organic, mono-cultural, and unitary conception of citizenship and community, individualistic liberalism has a strongly normalising edge to it which can, in situations where the boundaries between the normal and the pathological communities are drawn strongly enough (as with racial divisions), have effects very similar to more authoritarian regimes based on quite different political philosophies. Discussing the better-known example of genocide, the Holocaust, Detlev Peukert suggested that National Socialism constituted a particularly fatal form of the tense relationship that runs through the entire history of social policy between...the normality that is to be fostered and required and...the non-conformity that is to be segregated or eliminated (1989: 129). His argument was that National Socialism drew on a general Fortschrittsoptimismus that final solutions could be found to various social questions so that an alliance of science and interventionist social engineering could put paid to all outstanding causes of social unease (1991: 134-5). What made this gardening (Bauman 1987) conception of social policy so problematic was the combination of an organic conception of society, the Volksgemeinschaft, and the absence of the ideals of equal rights, emancipation, self-determination and common humanity (Peukert 1987: 248).

There is, then, a powerful tension at the heart of liberal understandings of individuals as developing from childhood to maturity and their place in society, between, for example, the best interests of the child and the best interests of society. Certainly one can see evidence of an on-going tension between, for example, Hasluck and his competitor as the leading theorist of assimilation, A.P. Elkin, Professor of Anthropology at the University of Sydney between 1934 and 1951. Assimilation, however, wrote Elkin in the 1950s, does not mean, or necessarily involve, the extinction of the Aboriginal race, that is, swallowing it by social processes and intermarriage, nor that to be citizens, Aborigines must give up all their kinship customs and their beliefs and rites, or that local groups must no longer think of themselves as closely knit communities. Elkin felt that although scattered in groups across Australia, and increasing in numbers, the Aborigines will have their own sense and experience of solidarity, of possessing a common history, - in short, of being a people.

A useful illustration of these arguments can be found in the way they were

19 Elkin Papers, University of Sydney, Series 17, Box 19, Item 109.
20 Elkin Papers, University of Sydney, Series 17, Box 143, Item, 111.
21 Elkin Papers, University of Sydney, Series 17, Box 19, Item 109. See also the discussions in Thomas (1994), Rowse (1999) and McGregor (1999).
reflected in Government statements on the definition of assimilation. These policy statements, which would appear variously in Annual Reports, press releases, statements in Parliament, were carefully thought about and argued over among Aboriginal administrators throughout Australia, and operated as focal points for the discursive construction of Aboriginal welfare. They tended to have three elements, statements on (1) the relation of the Aboriginal to the European population, (2) the rights of Aboriginal people, and (3) their relationship to their own culture and history. Up until 1961, the first category stressed that Aboriginal people were to eventually become indistinguishable from other members of the Australian community in manner of life, standards of living, occupations and participation in community affairs, there was no mention of the second, and the third emphasised that assimilation depends ...on assisting the aboriginal people to detach themselves from their present position of group separateness. After 1961, the emphasis on becoming indistinguishable had been modified to encourage Aboriginal people being able to participate equally with all other Australians in community affairs, and to adopt a similar manner of life, and instead of simply detaching themselves from their history, assimilation was deemed possible while still retaining connections with and pride in their Aboriginal ancestry. Hasluck himself equated the latter with strange capers at Hallowe’en, and he clearly continued to resist the idea, given that the policy statement contained in the pamphlet produced by his Department in 1961, One People (p. 10), continued to omit the reference to Aboriginal ancestry, but the subsequent history of Aboriginal affairs, particularly the move towards land rights and self-determination, shows that it was Elkin’s form of liberalism which was on the ascendancy.

This tension within liberalism is also reflected in the thinking of administrators responsible for putting policy into practice, which displays some consciousness of what was problematic about child removal. For example, in 1909, the Queensland Chief Protector referred to the removal of groups of mothers and their children to mission stations and reserves, and said: Many of the children so collected are very fair with beautiful curly hair and often with refined features. It seems a pity that they cannot be separated, but it would only be cruel to take them, without good cause, from their mothers. Later Roth also expressed contradictory feelings and thoughts; on the one hand, he said that he lent strongly to the view that it is less cruel to these unfortunates to keep them among the race to which they belong, half by blood and almost wholly by nature, than to expect them to take a place with their white sisters, where uncongenial conditions and company condemn them very often to what can only be an unhappy lonely existence.

But, none the less, on the other hand, I think it is certainly desirable where an illegitimate quadroon white child is born, that it be taken from its mother as early as it is safe to do so and placed in care of the State Children Department to be brought up as a white child. Many of such children have fair hair and blue

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eyes, and show practically no traces of the aboriginal blood in them, and it would be a shame to leave them in the degrading atmosphere of the camp.23 There was at least some conflict in the minds of the administrators, then, between regret being expressed about the cruelty of taking children from their mothers, or the waste of leaving a part-European child to grow up as an Aboriginal, without a clear, rational, means of distinguished between which form of regret was preferable to the other. Tim Rowse (1998: 87) and Anna Haebich (2000) point out that diverse strategies were pursued in different parts of Australia; not all States introduced specific legislation targeting Aboriginal children, and there were differences in the level of intrusion into parental rights, powers to remove and retain children, and the nature of child placements as well as where children were placed - in Aboriginal children’s institutions, dormitories in multipurpose institutions, and mainstream children’s homes (Haebich 2000: 148).

If we assume that the best interests of the child and those of society simply work in harmony, the tendency is that the former are almost always defined in terms of the latter. Rather than simply being an error in judgement, a mistake for which Australians today should or should not apologise, the policies and practices surrounding the stolen generations reveal two much more fundamental flaws buried deep within liberalism: the difficulty which its juridical or contractual individualism produces for a comprehension of individuals as socially located, inter-generational, inter-subjective beings, their essentially communal identities stretched over time both backwards and forwards (van Krieken 1997), and its mono-cultural and organicist conception of society, which allows only for assimilation to a single, individualised and de-communalised way of life. It is only to extent that both these features of liberal political and social rationality are addressed that we can hope for any degree of certainty that similar histories will not re-emerge in relation to any group without the protection afforded by a visible and publicly respected cultural and political presence.

Hasluck once wondered...why it was that men of decent habit and usually of controlled passions were moved to a tolerance of violence and even to its commission. (Hasluck 1942: 179). We need look no further than Hasluck himself to find an answer, because it was his own conception and experience of welfare which in turn put a very particular spin on his conception of civilization, turning it into something which today we recognize much more as violence. What Hasluck’s assimilationist civility lacked was an understanding of distinctions and differences within the category civilization, which would have enabled him to acknowledge and recognize the essential social, communal and familial bases of Aboriginal people’s identity and existence, rather than regarding Aboriginality merely as a constraint on modernity to be shed as quickly as possible.

The specific significance of the Australian stolen generations history is that it is not simply one of a dominance of communal identities over individuals, with all the negations of individual freedoms and rights which that entails. In fact, it shows how the two are interlinked and that a commitment to liberal values, practices and institutions in itself tells us too little about how they operate in practice. Within a

particular civilizational framework, the removal of Aboriginal children was structured around a conception of well-being and welfare itself based on an understanding of ideal civilized human subjectivity which denied Aboriginal children a cultural history and identity. It was the particularly mono-cultural focus on individuals assimilating into an empire of uniformity which undermined communal identity, in turn inflicting significant long-term psychological and social violence on the individuals who make up communities.

The vicissitudes of relations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians indicates that liberal citizenship and welfare should be regarded as a terrain over which social and political strategies are played out, a central one of which is to claim some fixed, natural content to the concept of welfare while leaving the establishment of its preconditions and constitutive elements in the unexamined realm of administration. The analytical significance of this discussion of aspects of liberal governance under settler-colonialism is that it highlights the varying ways in which the key to any era’s, group’s or individual’s welfare - and the indeed the proper realisation of liberalism’s ethical project - is to be found in its particular understanding of civilization, as well as the role played by that idea within particular programmes of government.

If the idea of the civilizing mission is central to the political rationality of liberal governance, so too is that of civilizing the state, promoting the assumption of responsibility within individuals and groups themselves for the ethical mode and substantive civility of contemporary practices of government. In a number of important senses, then, the demands currently being made by civil society of the state - that, for example, it subject itself constantly and systematically to the critical scrutiny of a variety economic, social and political actors in society - have always been central to a particularly liberal political rationality. Questions such as, how can non-government organisations play socially positive roles in building civil society and civilising their states? can be seen as exactly the sort of question which liberal government inherently poses for itself, since it is what makes political rationality specifically liberal.

However, an important consequence of the current shift to a post-colonial advanced liberalism capable of a critique of Aboriginal child removal has been that, in addition to the development of new forms of political practice and the organisation of social life, our understanding of our past has also been re-framed so as to render some its central features highly problematic. Partly because of the parallel development of similarly critical understandings of other aspects of past state activity, fewer and fewer people are persuaded that the ethos of welfare characteristic of the assimilationist era of settler-colonialism had Aboriginal well-being as its primary objective, and it looks increasingly like a relatively inhumane, bureaucratic and ham-fisted attempt at racial and social engineering. It seems simply absurd today that anyone seriously expected parents to simply forget their children, and that no thought at all was given to the possibility that children would be unable to forget their parents, let alone turning their minds to how people taken from their families were meant to understand their own personal biographies. It is now much more difficult for church and state authorities to claim ethical and normative continuity with their previous incarnations, so that liberals now have a political choice between maintaining their assertion of historically continuous identity by
taking responsibility for past practices and issuing some sort of public apology for the violence of their past treatment of individuals in their care, on the one hand, or giving up on historical continuity altogether and pleading different times, different standards, nothing to do with us, on the other.

A major problem facing our conception and experience of civilization is also that the restraint of violence and force characterizing liberalism and the rule of law is itself founded on violence and force (Cover 1986; Sarat & Kearns 1992; Derrida 1990). Civilizing processes which are organized around a self-perception as civilized without a corresponding identification with the different humanity of others, adhering to different civilizational standards, tend to be accompanied by aggression and violence towards those who remain uncivilized, largely because of the threat they pose to the fragility of the achievements of civilisation, It is this aggression which then underlies the associated civilizing offensives. The state monopolization of violence in fact involved the exercise precisely of violence on groups seen to lie outside the prevailing standards of civilization, so that civilizing processes often constitute not the simple reduction of violence and aggression, but their rearrangement.

The contribution which these arguments can make is to help broaden the issues we engage with in thinking about the connections between liberal governance and civilization. As well as asking whether the infrastructure of civil society can support democracy and popular participation, or how non-government organisations might contribute towards building civil society, civilizing their states, or encouraging restorative justice, we can also address questions concerning the nature of liberalism and civilization themselves, including: in the process of civilizing liberalism itself, can we identify a dark underbelly of barbarism inherent in precisely that process? what are the colonizing dimensions of what we have chosen to characterize as civilization? how can the constraint of violence which civilized liberalism is meant to encourage be undertaken without reproducing merely different forms of violence? in what ways are the interrelationships between governance and civilization configured by particular sets of legal conditions, by underlying legislative and judicial frameworks? what kind of debate is it possible to have about the definition of civility within highly differentiated societies, particularly its degree of homogeneity or heterogeneity? The practical realization of answers to questions such as these, I would suggest, will play an important role in developing forms of government which might be more likely genuinely to take us beyond both assimilation and cultural genocide, to realize the ethical and political aims of both civilization and liberalism.

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