



## **Modernity as a new civilization?**

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Although the revival of civilizational analysis is closely linked to new ways of theorizing modernity and modernization, the question of modernity's civilizational status has so far received less attention than it merits. It is most explicitly raised in recent essays by S.N.Eisenstadt, where the idea of modernity as a new civilization is developed through an analysis of its distinctive antinomies. But Eisenstadt has also referred to modernity as a new type of civilization, and this difference seems significant: the second formulation hints at a more radical break, and suggests that it might be useful to think of modernity as a new kind of civilizational formation, for which we might need to develop more adequate concepts. If recent contributions to the debate are examined along those lines, various approaches - often implicit - can be discerned. From one point of view, modernity appears as a civilizational transition: a new breakthrough of civilization in the singular, with the question of perspectives for civilizations in the plural still unsettled; from another, it might seem more plausible to speak of a civilizational paradox: a formation that surpasses older civilizations in its ability to impose basic cultural premises on a global scale, but remains dependent on them for key integrative and self-interpretive devices.