

Meeting the Other – European Expansion to America (Utopia and Slavery of the Early Modern Era)

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The colonization and settlement of the overseas regions in the Early Modern period, the economical and strategic utilization of their resources and inhabitants had a great importance for the individual European countries and for the Old World in general. There are strong reasons to suspect that the role of the overseas regions in contributing to stimulate changes in traditional mental outlooks from the early 16th century on has not yet been sufficiently appreciated. The voyages of discovery enabled the society of the European subcontinent to expand beyond its borders in a fashion unprecedented in the history of the world, “westernizing” the great bulk of humanity, imposing its institutions and ideas, its languages and culture, its technologies and economy around the earth. Even more important, however, was the influence of such unprecedented encounter upon the European mind. European conquest and colonization of the overseas regions gave impulse to long-term processes of contact, competition and mutual enrichment of radically different cultures and lifestyles.

In this respect, the phenomenon of “discovery” and the subsequent colonization of America acquires an extraordinary influence. Concerning all other discoveries of islands and continents, none of them has been so spectacular and unexpected. It is true that the contact with and colonization of Africa and Asia (already known in the Antiquity and in the Middle Ages) and later Australia, for example, or the Pacific Islands, also left deep traces in the European mind.¹ However, in the year 1492 and long after America was completely, genuinely new, that is, a previously unknown world. Its discovery was unexpected, its extent was great, even enormous, and its inhabitants, flora and fauna extremely different from those of every other region. In the words of French humanist Louis LeRoy, the “*new lands, new seas, new formes of men, manners, lawes and customes; new diseases and new remedies; new waies of the Heavens, and of the Ocean, never before found out*”² provoked the imagination, shattered the established perception of the world. Even the first steps of a man on the Moon were not, because, after all, the moon has always been here known to us, even though inaccessible. In the year 1552 the Spanish chronicler Gómara, in the dedication to Charles V of his *General History of the Indies*, called the discovery of America “*the greatest event since the creation of the World (excluding the incarnation and death of Him who created it)*.” For us is sometimes difficult to appreciate this sudden breakthrough of the firm, secure boundaries of the world that was brought out in the fifteenth century. The conquest of America, above all, meant the discovery of the “world” as such, a world of which Europe was only a small part. It must have been a tremendous shock, and, definitely, one of the most important factors in the development of the modernity. It is not by

¹ Interesting – even though necessarily schematic – survey of the development of European posture towards the overseas regions in general offers Urs Bitterli, *Alte Welt – neue Welt: Formen des europäisch-überseeischen Kulturkontakts vom 15. bis zum 18. Jahrhundert*, München 1986 (English translation: *Cultures in Conflict: Encounters between European and Non-European Cultures, 1492-1800*, trans. Ritchie Robertson, Stanford 1989)

² Louis LeRoy, *On the Interchangeable Course, or Variety of Things in the Whole World*, London 1594, cf. Jack P. Greene, *Imperatives, Behaviors and Identities: Essays in Early American Cultural History*, Charlottesville 1992, p. 351.

chance that historians customarily fix the dividing point between the Middle Ages and modern history at the discovery of America.

Historians traditionally have assumed that Europe's impact on the rest of the world was of much greater interest and concern than the impact of the world on Europe. And the truth is that the American historians, philosophers and essayists could not – or at least should not – study their own identity without considering its European roots. But in the same way, the inhabitants of the Old World could not ignore the radical changes provoked by the contact with the overseas. While the Latin American historian and essayist Edmundo O'Gorman in his classical work³ stated that America had not been “discovered” by Europeans but rather “created” or “contrived”, we might as well study how their contact with the newly conquered continent enabled the Europeans to “invent”, observe and reform themselves as well.

Certainly, the extent of influence of any such abstract phenomenon as “discovery” or “meeting” of another continent on the human mind is difficult to prove and study. The “material” consequences of the American enterprise could be counted, measured and weighted by historians – be it the volume of Mexican and Peruvian silver flooding the European monetary market, the penetration of potatoes to the diet of various European nations or even the microbes exchanged between races.⁴ But how we are to measure the degree of surprise? At the same time, the multifarious ecology and inhabitants of the American continent exerted varied influence on the respective colonizing nations, groups and individuals, who perceived them differently according to their momentaneous situations and their intellectual background. In spite of all these facts we can possibly try to formulate several theses about the impact of the view of “*new lands and the new world, concerning which we hitherto have had no knowledge nor have heard anything*”, as stated the title of the compilation of Vespucci's letters on America, published in the Czech language around 1506 as a first information of these unique discoveries.⁵ Because their impacts repercutated not only in the countries that took a direct part in the colonizing process, but through intermediation in other regions of Europe as well.

For the posture of the Europeans on America and its inhabitants and on themselves often had been determinant not what new the explorers, conquistadors and colonizers really saw on the other side of the Atlantic, but what they wanted to see there. The overseas regions in their eyes constituted not a subject *sui juris*, but – if we want to take over a bit worn-out idiom, often used by essayists and investigators – a “mirror” to which they projected their actual needs.⁶ At the basis of most European comments on the American people stood the conviction that they are real “others”, fundamentally different from the inhabitants of the Old World. In this sense, there were two contrasting perceptions distinguishable since the first moments of encounter, perceptions that were situated on the opposite sides of imaginary spectrum. Idealization of the newly discovered nations served as an argument for reformers criticizing the moral decay of the European society of the time and on the other hand, degrading descriptions of the

³ Edmundo O'Gorman, *La invención de América (Investigación acerca de la estructura histórica del Nuevo Mundo y del sentido de su devenir)*, México 1958 (English version: *The invention of America*, Bloomington 1961)

⁴ See the nowadays classical works of Pierre Chaunu, *Seville et l'Amérique, XVIe-XVIIe siècle*, Paris 1977, or Alfred Crosby, *The Columbian Exchange (Biological and Cultural Consequences of 1492)*, Westport 1972.

⁵ *Spis o nových zemích a novém svete*, ed. Pravoslav Kneidl, Prague 1981 (with English introduction and translation of the pamphlet).

⁶ In this respect, see for example Josep Fontana, *Europa ante el espejo*, Barcelona 1994.

“American cannibals” boosted the confidence of the Europeans and helped to reinforce feelings of exclusivity and superiority over the rest of the world. And, similarly, the idealization of the New World nature and its descriptions as terrestrial paradise accentuated, indirectly, the critiques aimed at the Old World living conditions, while the descriptions of American “wilderness” and “desert” reinforced the conviction of Europeans of their own “cultivation” and “civility”.⁷

But what was important aspect of both of these seemingly opposed views of the American natives was the fact that they seemed to be unburdened by any cultural tradition, history or written literature. They were “*soft as wax*” and easily moldable. The American natives not only lacked the vices of selfishness and greed, “*not distinguishing between ‘mine’ and ‘thine’*”,⁸ at least in the eyes of European moralists. They at the same time seemed to lack the “history”, the burden of the tradition and remembrances of the deeds and customs of their ancestors. Thus, for these commentators, they were apt to the educational pressures, in accordance to the precepts of Plato who in his *Republic* compared the ruler to the artist who must “*wipe the slate of human society and human habits clean*”⁹ in order to produce a new, better picture. The reform thinkers thus appreciated the possibilities that rendered to them the “discovery” of people whom they saw as a “*clean canvas*”.

America – with “*neither a history nor any political forms at all*” – invited people to consider how in an as yet unarticulated space Old World institutions and socioeconomic, religious, and political arrangements might be modified to produce the best possible commonwealths. More’s *Utopia*, written in 1515 or 1516, is one of the first manifestations of such intellectual creativity inspired by the New World. Although most students of More and of the utopian tradition put little emphasis upon it, More located *Utopia* to the shore of America and used as his central literary device the experienced traveler, participant on one of the voyages of Amerigo Vespucci, just returned from the “*unknown nations and countries*” of the New World.¹⁰ John Locke wrote in his *Second Treatise of Government* about America as an unformed and free space, a place still without the corruptions and “*trammels*” of the Old World, and waiting to be the site of Europe’s new beginning.¹¹

⁷ Already in the Classical literature – for example, in Herodoto – appeared the conviction that the quality of the human life degrades proportionally to the distance from the “city” (polis) and that the absence of such signs of culture as the notion of writing, of written fixation of history, of laws etc. manifests itself also in the “desertic” character of the landscape. Similarly, in the Christian discourse of the Middle Ages the term “desert” served to denominate the places lacking the Divine presence and dominated by Devil, the principal enemy of the humanity. (Guy Rozat, *América, imperio del demonio (Cuentos y recuentos)*, México 1995, pp. 66-70; the author quotes the monography of François Hartog, *Le Miroir d'Hérodote (Essai sur la représentation de l'autre)*, Paris 1986) Similarly, in Shakespeare’s *Tempest*, the shipwrecked nobleman Gonzalo judges: “*Though this island seem to be desert... Uninhabitable, and almost inaccessible.*” (Cf. Eva Poskocilova, “This most desolate isle”, in: Anna Houskova, Martin Prochazka (eds.), *Utopias del nuevo mundo/Utopias of the New World (Actas del Simposio Internacional/Proceedings of the International Symposium)*, Prague 1993, p. 84.

⁸ Pedro Mártir de Anglería, *Décadas del Nuevo Mundo*, trans. Joaquín Torres Asencio, Buenos Aires 1944, p. 40. In describing the inhabitants of Virginia, Thomas Hariot in the year 1590 wrote that they were “*free from all care of heaping off Riches for their posteritie, content with their state, and liuinge friendlye together of those things which god of his bountie hath giuen unto them.*” (Thomas Hariot, Notes to the paintings of John White, in D. B. QUINN (ed.), *Roanoke Voyages*, London 1955, Vol. 1, p. 435) Such behavior of course also aluded to the times of the first Apostles, when “*all believers were together and had everything in common.*” (Acts 2:44).

⁹ Plato, *The Republic*, trad. D. Lee, London 1974, p. 297.

¹⁰ Thomas More, *Utopia*, trans. Paul Turner, Harmondsworth 1965

¹¹ John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government*, London 1772 (1st ed. 1690), p. 214.

Sure, the positive impression of the New World was not the only one. There were also negative perceptions of America as “desert” and “wilderness” inhabited by “the savage beasts”. While the image of Indian as an idealized representant of the Golden Age was appropriated readily by many authors who never visited the American soil, the German artillerist Hans Staden, in the middle of the sixteenth century waited imprisoned by the members of the Tupinamba tribe on the coast of Brazil, “for nine months, every day and every hour by hour awaited to be killed and devoured without mercy.”¹² But still, the positive evaluation was strong enough to provoke considerations that tried to incorporate the American natives and American nature to the projects aiming for reform of European society. After its discovery, the New World presented itself as an opportunity for spiritual and secular reform, for constructing a more perfect society.

Christian missions, Catholic as well as Protestant, belong to the most original expressions of the reform endeavor incited by the contact with the New World. The desire to fulfill Christ’s appeal – “go to all the world and preach the good news to all creation”(Mk 16:15) – stood at the very root of the Western Christianity and also contained in itself a strong impulse for social reform, as it implied that through Christ’s message it was possible to achieve not only the eternal salvation, but also a general improvement of the earthly human condition. But on the American continent the missionary activity went far beyond its basic, that is, religious objective (that we never should ignore or underestimate). After the year 1492, there has been a constantly renewed hope among the reform Christian thinkers of finding there human beings untouched by the supposed evils corrupting the European society on the eve of the Modern period. And more important yet had been the effort to establish in the overseas domains a new social order, inspired by the communities of the first Christians as well as by the ideal constitutions of the Classical philosophers, that should become paragons for the rest of mankind.

Among the missionaries that followed up with these designs could be named the Franciscans, who – under the leadership of Vasco de Quiroga – established missionary settlements in contemporary Mexico, the so called *hospitales* that struggled for direct application of the guidelines of Thomas More.¹³ Famous was the enterprise of the Jesuits, who were pursuing their activity in the well-known region of Paraguay equally as in the less famous California or Upper Peru.¹⁴ Among the Protestants, there should be

¹² Hans Staden, *Die wahrhaftige Historia und Beschreibung einer Landschaft der wilden nacketen grimmigen Menschenfresserleuten, in der neuen Welt Amerika gelegen* (1557), facsimile ed., Frankfurt 1926, unpag. In 1524 the bishop of Darién, Tomás de Ortiz described the inhabitants of the continent as “more given to sodomy than any other nation. No justice exists among them, they go naked, they have no respect either for love or for shame, they are like donkeys, stupid, silly, without sense; they are bestial in their vices, cruel and revengeful.” (Quoted in Sofia Reding Blase, *El buen salvaje y el Canibal*, México 1992, p. 12)

¹³ See Silvio Zavala, *La “Utopía” de Tomás Moro en la Nueva España y otros estudios*, México 1937, F. B. Warren, *Vasco de Quiroga and his Pueblo-Hospitals of Santa Fe*, Washington 1963; and especially the outlines of the project, sketched by Vasco de Quiroga, *Información en derecho* (1535), ed. Carlos Herrejón, México 1985.

¹⁴ Of the numerous literature on the topic of Paraguay, see Frederick J. Reiter, *They Built Utopia (The Jesuit Missions in Paraguay, 1610-1768)*, Potomac 1995; Fernando Medina Ruiz, *El paraíso perdido. Las Reducciones Jesuitas del Paraguay*, México 1987; Alberto Armani, *Città di Dio e città del sole. Lo “Stado” gesuita dei Guarani, 1609-1768*, Roma 1977; Philip Caraman, *The Lost Paradise: An Accounts of the Jesuits in Paraguay, 1607-1768*, London 1975. For the jesuits in northern Mexico, see Ignacio del Río, *Conquista y aculturación en la California jesuítica, 1697-1768*, México 1994, and also my texts, Marketa Krizova, *La ciudad ideal en el desierto: Proyectos misionales de la Compañía de Jesús y la Iglesia Morava en la América colonial*, Prague in 2004; the same, *The Ideal City and Lost Paradise: The Society of Jesus and the Moravian Church in the New World, Acta Comeniana* 15-16 (2002), pp. 141-168

named in the first place the so called Unity of Brethren or Moravian Church, a Protestant church that was established at the beginning of the eighteenth century in Herrnhut, Saxony, by a group of religious exiles from Moravia. In the eighteenth and early nineteenth century, its members were active proponents of missionary endeavor in North America as well as in the Caribbean or, for example, Surinam.¹⁵ The missionary-reform efforts of all these Christian groups converged in the phenomenon of the “mission cities”, that is, isolated communities, located usually on the margin of the already colonized American territory, were inhabited only by the newly converted natives and placed under the exclusive administration of priests. They came to life not only in the colonies of the Catholic powers (Spain, Portugal, or France), but also in the regions acquired by Protestants, the Dutch and the British. On the other hand, these specific communities were not established on other continents, even though these were also colonized by the European powers and became objects of the mission activity of the same Catholic orders or Protestant churches that carried on their projects in America. This fact might contribute as one of the proofs for the assertion that America – the New World – acquired a special, unique role in the efforts for amendment within the European society of the Early Modern Era.¹⁶

Among the reasons for situating the reformed society to American continent was its already mentioned supposed “newness”, in other words, the outlasting notion that in contrast to Europe, America is a continent without history and lacking the vices of the Old World, where the unspoiled natives could play the role of the first participants on the new social order. Besides, what provoked the activity of the missionaries was the abundant free space in America where projects for better humanity could be realized without the interference of European sovereigns. Michel de Montaigne already in the late 1570s declared that “*the discovery of such a boundless country was indeed worthy of consideration.*”¹⁷ And in this “boundless country”, the Christian missions – Catholics as well as Protestant – in general followed up with two contesting designs. On one hand, there had been a desire for part of the missionaries themselves to achieve through his message a general improvement of the human condition in general and of European society in particular. The missions among the American Indians offered the illusion of a return to the *primaevae* times of apostles, a possibility to start to build anew a society fulfilling truly Christ’s teaching.

At the same time, though, the missionaries became a vanguard of the very society they intended to change. Their activity was inseparable from the general process of the European colonization. They themselves carried with them to the wilderness their own “cultural baggage” of ideas, usages and prejudices stemming from the Old World

¹⁵ For the history of the Unity of Brethren/Moravian Church see David Cranz, *Alte und Neue Brüder-Historie oder kurz gefaßte Geschichte der Evangelischen Brüder-Unität in den ältern Zeiten und insonderheit in dem gegenwärtigen Jahrhundert*, Barby/Leipzig 1771; John Taylor Hamilton, Kenneth G. Hamilton, *History of the Moravian Church*, Bethlehem 1967; Marketa Krizova, Building a new identity: the first decades of existence of the Moravian Church, in Vaclav Buzek, Dana Stefanova (eds.), *Menschen – Handlungen – Strukturen (Historisch-anthropologische Zugangsweisen in den Geschichtswissenschaften)*, Ceske Budejovice 2001, pp. 407-422

¹⁶ At this moment, however, it should be stressed that a more thorough comparative research should be realized that would ascertain the substantial differences between, for example, the Jesuit missions in Paraguay and California and missions of the same order in China and Japan, with respects to the goals proclaimed as well as the methods used. Because of the specific character of source base, the complications posed by the language of these sources, as well as diverse historical and cultural backgrounds of these two regions, the such research should necessarily be a collective enterprise.

¹⁷ Michel de Montaigne, *Essays*, transl. John Florio (1603), New York [1933], p. 163.

traditions; besides, they were entrusted by the monarchs and colonial governments with exploration of the yet unknown lands and administration of territories recently conquered. If the European expansion into overseas regions in the fifteenth to eighteenth centuries was motivated primarily by economic objectives, its protagonists perceived the colonizing process – or, at least, presented it – as a way to export the best features the Old World to the newly discovered colonies. Most important of these exports was, of course, Christian religion (in its various denominational forms), together with a tradition of literacy and literature. But political institutions and forms of government were also emphasized, with the tradition of the “*political life*” of individuals joined into a complex, organized and hierarchical social structure. This inner inconsistency of the mission endeavor could be viewed as one of the principal causes of the final failure of most of the missionary experiments.

Not only the missions as such, the overseas conquests in general were considered by contemporaries as means of spreading “*civilization*” and “*enlightenment*” even before these words began to be widely used within European discourse. Sources on the early phase of the colonization abound in describing the “*liberation*” of the inhabitants of the overseas regions from the “*darkness*” of ignorance and barbarity.¹⁸ But the processes of overseas colonization surely brought about many phenomena that were, at least from a contemporary point of view, in apparent contradiction to such ideals. The collision of worlds resulted in armed conquests that brought about enormous death tolls as well as material losses. Noticeable was also the revival of the institution of chattel slavery, applied first to the American natives and then to Africans, forcibly transported over the Atlantic Ocean. Slavery – the perpetual deprivation of a human being of all rights, his or her degradation into a transferable possession and a work tool of another person – has been an institution common to many, perhaps most, societies in recorded history. After reaching a considerable peak in Antiquity, during the Middle Ages slavery declined throughout Europe, but the legal validity of the institution had never been negated. Within the frame of the colonizing processes of the modern era, slavery became restricted to the areas outside Europe – and more specifically, to America – and its victims were recruited exclusively from persons of non-European descent.

In the New World, the institution of slavery, applied first to the American natives and then to African blacks, forcibly transported over the Atlantic Ocean, reached unprecedented levels not only for the quantity of persons enslaved, but especially for the extreme brutality these were subjected to, at least in some regions. Colonial “*plantations*”, based on racial seclusion, overwork, malnutrition and systematic degradation of black Africans, were denominated “*infernos*” by contemporaries¹⁹ and by historians as a “*monstrous distortion of human society*” chiefly characterized by “*the*

¹⁸ Already the letter of Paolo Toscanelli to Columbus expressed the joy of Florentine savant that “*path will be opened to these remote lands... for the instruction of Catholic religion and in all sciences we possess.*” (Quoted by Beatriz Pastor Bodmer, *Discurso narrativo de la conquista de América*, La Habana 1983, p. 37) A Jesuit historian described the missionaries of his order as “*spreading the rays of Gospel and dispersing the shadows.*” (Andrés Pérez de Ribas, *Historia de los triunfos de nuestra santa fe*, México 1645, facs. ed. Ignacio Guzmán Betancourt, México 1992, Prologue, unpag.) During his stay in Amsterdam, the Czech philosopher and theologian Jan Amos Comenius commented approvingly on the fact that native children in Ceylon and other Dutch overseas possessions were being sent to schools, because this would “*release these barbaric peoples from their darkness and lead them to enlightenment through Christ.*” (Quoted by Jan Marius van den Linde, *Jan Amos Comenius und die niederländische Missionstheologie seiner Zeit*, in *Comenius in World Science and Culture*, ed. Jaroslav Pánek, Prague 1991, p. 187)

¹⁹ Jesuit António Vieira (1633), commenting on Brazilian sugarworks (*ingenio*) quoted in Stuart B. Schwartz, *Sugar Plantations in the Formation of Brazilian Society: Bahia, 1550-1835*, Cambridge/London 1986, p. 132.

astounding neglect and perversion of almost everyone of the basic prerequisites for normal living".²⁰ By modern standards of civil and human rights, the institution was inhuman, and it represented a clear betrayal of the visions of social and moral reform.

While the enslaving of the Indians and black Africans unequivocally revealed the conquering nature of the European overseas expansion, it also intimately coincided with missionary activities of Catholic as well as Protestant churches who themselves often owned, exploited and traded in slaves. These missionaries even financed their model communities, the "mission cities" inhabited by the American Indians, from yields of plantations manned by the African slaves. Rather than denounce this contradiction as a mere inconsistency, hypocrisy or passive conformation to economic necessities of colonial life, we should analyze the ambiguous efforts of missionizing slavers in a more general perspective: as another expression of this intellectually challenging period of overseas discoveries, and, in fact, as another form of "American utopia".

Slavery in America was a response primarily to economic necessity. There would have been no enslavement of Africans without persistent demand for labor in underpopulated colonies, caused by a steep demographic decline of the native population and the introduction of a large-scale cultivation of labor-intensive tropical crops that were exported from colonies to Europe. But at the same time, slavery had constituted part of the already mentioned efforts for social rearrangement and reform that took place within the frame of the colonizing process. The social and economic problems that slavery attempted to solve by far exceeded the momentary shortage of manpower in the newly conquered regions of America. Reflections on specific institution of American slavery gave new dimensions and increased the complexity of intellectual discourse of modernizing Europe.

Slavery had always embodied a fundamental contradiction arising from the ultimately impossible attempt to define and treat men as objects; but at the same time, from antiquity this institution also became intertwined with religious and philosophic rationalization for authority and subordination.²¹ Many social thinkers of the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries perceived the establishment of slavery on American soil as a means of the reinforcement of social order and hierarchy, as a stabilizing force and bulwark against the "unrestrained license"²² that became one of the characteristic features of the modernizing European society. Besides, considering the already mentioned images of colonization as an exportation of European "enlightenment", the incorporation of slaves of African origin into the newly established social order of the New World, even against their will, could be seen and certainly was seen by some not only as benefit to the colonists, but also to the slaves themselves – in their "liberation" from the forces of poverty, barbarity and hedonism.

Last but not least, throughout the implementation of slavery upon the American soil, slavery that applied only to certain groups (Native Americans and black Africans),

²⁰ Orlando Patterson, *The Sociology of Slavery: An Analysis of the Origins, Development, and Structure of Negro Slave Society in Jamaica*, London 1967, p. 9. Manuel Moreno Fraginals, *El ingenio. El complejo económico social cubano del azúcar*, La Habana 1978, Vol. 2, p. 7, considered plantations "deformed social organisms." Commenting the colonial enterprise as a whole, PASTOR BODMER, *El jardín y el peregrino*, p. 7, asserted that "colonial America is not a utopia. It's a monstrosity. Nevertheless, the utopic dimension of visions of those that created it cannot be denied."

²¹ David Brion Davis, *Problem of slavery in the Age of Revolution, 1780-1823*, Ithaca 1975, p. 82.

²² As explained by John Locke, "state of liberty... is not a state of license". (Locke, *Two Treatises of Government*, p. 178).

the process of the elaboration of a “common” European identity was strongly corroborated. This process took place in the Early Modern Era as parallel with the processes of shaping specific national identities. As a direct consequence of the overseas expansion of the fifteenth to eighteenth centuries, the European public entered into direct, as well as indirect contact, with a wide variety of “races”, cultures and ethnic groups. Through this contact, a process of elaboration of “European” self-identity through a negative mirror image of the “other”, and through the accentuation of the real as well as the imagined distinctions from the rest of mankind, was instigated within Old World society. Of all the human groups “discovered” by Europeans, the most distinctive and the most clearly identifiable was the black Africans. Through the negative image of the “Negro slave”, its antithesis, the notion of the “free European”, was established, as was the impermeable legal, political, economic and cultural barrier between the groups.²³

These are just several examples of the multi-facet intellectual influences and stimulations brought about by the overseas expansion of the Early Modern Era and, more concretely, by the discovery and colonization of the American continent, as it was being revealed gradually to the eyes of contemporaries through explorations and conquests. Examples that attest that the role of multiple and variable image of “America” as an object of dreams and criticism in contributing to stimulate changes in European mental outlooks from the early sixteenth century on has not yet been sufficiently appreciated.

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²³ The problem of American “slaving utopia” as well as that of self-identification of Europeans on the basis of negative image of “Negro slave” is being dealt in detail in my study: Marketa Krizova, *“The strength and sinews of this western world...” (African slavery, American colonies and the effort for reform of European society in the Early Modern Era)*, Prague 2007 (forthcoming).