

## Chapter 2

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# Reflections of European Self-Images in Ottoman Mirrors

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This study seeks to understand how the European self-image is formed *vis-a-vis* the image of the Ottomans or Turks in the European intellectual discourse.<sup>1</sup> One may reveal that the European self-image is ambiguous and diverse as it appears in the Ottoman mirrors throughout the modern history. Nonetheless, this study attempts to delineate and analyze the major turning points in the European self-understanding. In other words, my aim is to see how an idea of Europe with respect to non-Europeans or the Turks in this case, is constructed in European public opinion from the sixteenth century onward. Engaging such an investigation may reveal the foundations and development of Euro-centric thought.

In this regard, one may start by seeking answers to such questions: What does Europe mean to Europeans? What does the European self-image reflect in different periods of history? How do Europeans perceive themselves, or is there a characteristic self-understanding peculiar to Europeans in different periods of history? Obviously these are open ended and general questions. I don't have the intention to answer them, but I will try to discuss these questions by narrowing down the scope of these inquiries. It is useful to point out that I will be discussing the search for a meaning of Europe in the eyes of European thinkers, or those intellectuals who see themselves as Europeans.

For some of the twentieth century thinkers Europe is an ambiguous term—it is a construct,<sup>2</sup> whereas for others it is an intelligible unit of analysis. The meaning of Europe was discussed in the twentieth century more than in any other time. On the one hand, throughout the twentieth century political thinkers and historians have argued that Europe has always been divided and differentiated and almost never unified in terms of religion, language or law. Indeed, they argued that a unified Europe is not desirable at all if one reminds oneself the projects of Napoleon, Hitler or Stalin.<sup>3</sup> On the other hand, at the end of twentieth century we see the construction of the European Union, which aims to unify Europe politically, economically and legally while assuming at least some degree of a common cultural heritage. One of the defining characteristics of this Union is that it takes place through a democratic process, and it is only those countries which are consolidated democracies that can become a part of the European Union. In other words, democracy is the most crucial criterion that

applies in the identification of a country as being a part of Europe today. However, as I will attempt to discuss here, throughout the modern history of Europe one may see a variety of criteria that have defined what Europe is in the eyes of Europeans themselves.

One has to recognize the fact that all the answers given to the question of what is Europe should unavoidably be a consequence of reduction, simplification, abstraction or distortion. At a panel titled "What does Europe mean today" held in 1970 at Wellesley College, Professor Colegero gave the most straightforward answer to this question. As there is no Platonic dictionary of ideas to refer to in which Europe would have been defined once and for all, Europe is whatever we want it to be.<sup>4</sup> The difficulty is that just as any other society or culture Europe is differentiated in itself, it is a multidimensional, diverse, and complex whole. Furthermore the question itself is extensive and it has been answered in many different contexts and the answers are diverse and multiple. In his answer to the question, Oscar Halecki eliminates the ambiguity and claims to find the essential and constant ingredient in the varying and changing idea of Europe at the expense of offering a Euro-centric formulation.<sup>5</sup> Halecki is a Polish historian, and the author of *The Limits and Divisions of European History* published in 1962.

According to Halecki, European history is "the history of all European nations considered as a whole, as a community clearly distinct from any other."<sup>6</sup> He defines Europe as the community of all nations, which "accepted and developed the heritage of Greco-Roman civilization; who are transformed and elevated by Christianity."<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, another major characteristic feature of Europe is that it is the land of the industrial revolution which Halecki believes, made Europe superior for a period of time.<sup>8</sup> Thus, Europe is not only a community of nations but it is also an age that had come to an end in the 1950s. What Halecki means by the Age of Europe is the age in which European culture is dominant and superior to the rest of the peoples and cultures of the world. Although Halecki agrees that throughout its history Europe is culturally diverse and politically divided, one may still draw the boundaries and define Europe as a community and an age. The European history (1050–1950) had come to a halt whenever non-Europeans intervened. Such breaks in the history of Europe took place when the Arabs occupied the Iberian Peninsula, when the Moguls invaded Russia, and when the Ottomans were settled in the Balkans and cut these places off of the history of Europe.<sup>9</sup> In a similar line of thought for Halecki fascism, communism, wars, and colonialism were the dreadful periods that divided Europe and eventually caused the collapse of the age of Europe.<sup>10</sup> Whenever freedom is suppressed in the European Peninsula, that region is placed outside of historical Europe.<sup>11</sup> Their participation in European history is interrupted until these places or peoples regained their freedom. Alongside the Greco-Roman heritage and Christianity, freedom is another essential ingredient that defines Europe. According to Halecki's understanding, Europe is the result of a series of additions (Greek, Roman, Christian) and subtractions (Arab, Mongolian, Ottoman). The most interesting aspect of the idea of Europe assumed by Halecki is not what we see as uniting under this idea, but what is taken out of it. In fact,

Halecki answers the question of what Europe is by answering the question of what Europe is not.

It is highly probable that Europeans did not define themselves only through a process of introspection. If they did, many thinkers and historians in the past and today would have given up thinking and researching about what Europe is. Since there would not be any ambiguity, a certain and constant idea of Europe would be available to all of us. In fact, Europeans as any other human community had defined and recognized themselves through an interaction with other communities and cultures (i.e. non-Europeans). Throughout these interactions, Europeans defined themselves with reference to non-Europeans and such a process of self-recognition produced diversity and differentiation in the self-images of Europe. The idea of Europe is ambiguous and complex because it is constructed and defined with respect to the non-European which is itself as diverse and complex as the idea of Europe. Defining oneself in relation to the other depends upon the nature and the conditions of the interaction. Furthermore, since the non-European is a large and varied category, the idea of Europe would be as varied and different. If Europe has defined itself in the mirrors of those societies and cultures that it encountered and communicated with, then these self-understandings are not only varied and diverse, but they are also relative—to say nothing of the world that they did not communicate with.<sup>12</sup> For this reason, the European self-image offers multiplicity, change, and complexity. For instance, eighteenth century European thinkers thought that Europeans are more polite and polished when they compared themselves to rude Ottomans; whereas when they compared themselves to Pacific Indians—that is the noble savages—Europeans see themselves as corrupt and hypocritical.<sup>13</sup> Obviously, when Europeans were identifying themselves in the mirrors held by other cultures, they were making comparisons and contrasts. As a result, we not only learn how they perceive other cultures, but we also have a grasp of how they perceived themselves relative to others.

The famous historian Barroclough emphasized a version of such relationality in search for a definition of the idea of Europe, which, for him, can be no more than the propaganda of those who believe in the idea of European unity. The idea of Europe, or a European self-image, can take shape only under a threat that can be perceived by the peoples of Europe. It could be an internal or external threat: Islam in the Middle Ages; Turks between the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries; Russia in the nineteenth century; Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union in the twentieth century were the threats that led to the self-identification of Europe, which also redrew the boundaries and limits of Europe. For Barroclough, the self-image of Europe is not consistent (or continuous) throughout time. On the contrary, it is a weak, fragile and short-lived idea taking shape under material and mental chaos. In this case, an idea of Europe emerges when Europe is under threat and disappears when the threat ends.<sup>14</sup> However, Europeans did not evaluate or define themselves only when they were under threat, but also when they were posing a threat. Furthermore, when Europeans encountered other cultures on peaceful terms, they would perceive themselves in different mirrors than they would in times of war. One may encounter the reflections of

the European self-image in mirrors that show the Europeans as superior, as well as inferior at different times and with respect to different cultures. For this reason, the self-image of Europe is extensive and varied throughout its history. Nevertheless, it becomes constant and obvious in times not only when it is under threat, but also when it poses a threat.

The self-understanding of any culture and the emerging self-identification has always happened through the process of interaction and communication with other cultures. In pursuit of understanding and exploring the other it is inevitable that a European self-image emerges which is both a relativistic and diversified image. As the other, that is the non-European is an extensive and varied category, the European self-image is as extensive and differentiated. The images of the other would inevitably change in time, as there would be changes in the nature of relations with the other. For this reason, the European self-image is multiple, complex and diverse.

However, one may still analyze such diversity and complexity around major themes and turning points while running the risk of being reductionist. If we leave the diversity and complexity of images aside, one may trace three major turning points in the formation of the European self-images *vis-à-vis* the Turks throughout the modern era or since the sixteenth century. One may name them as the Christian Europe; liberty of Europe; and civilized Europe. These images are constructed with reference to what we call today Western Europe. In all the three turning points Europeans defined themselves in relation and relative to the other—that is, the non-Christian, the non-free, and the uncivilized. These three turning points took place in European public opinion, and whether they have any connections or how far one can establish a connection between these images and the economic, political, or diplomatic transformations in Europe is a question beyond the scope of this study. Therefore, here I am not assuming a one-to-one connection between historical events and opinions, and at this point it would be wrong to assume one.

Defining the European Union as a Christian club is a popular tendency among Turkish conservatives today. However, it is quite an outmoded idea. Since the Enlightenment, those thinkers who wrote about being European or who reflected a European self-image, have been resorting to the idea of Christian Europe with less emphasis. Though it is a generally admitted fact that Europe is the place in which Christians live, this does not have any political, social, or economic relevance in identifying what defines to be European today.

### **Christianity and the European Self-Image**

Throughout the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, one may observe that Christianity is the key idea that defined the European self-image. In fact, by the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries the term Europe and Christendom start to imply each other.<sup>15</sup> Terms such as Christianity, Christian republic, Christian world, or “corpus Christianum” all referred to the unity of people who belonged to the Roman Catholic Church in Western Europe.<sup>16</sup> The Orthodox Church in Eastern Europe, and other Christians were kept outside of this unity. The foundation of

such unity was the religious community. The western borders of the Christian world included England, France, Italy, and Spain, which used to be the dominion of the Latin church of the middle ages. The Eastern borders were unstable and subject to change as a result of Ottoman assaults. During this time, Christianity was perceived as an organic whole, and a given unity. Terms such as Asia, Africa, or Europe referred to variety and multiplicity. Turks were the main source of contact that fed and sustained the Christian self-image of Europe. They were labeled as the public calamity, public enemy, or the terror of the world. It has been pointed out that throughout the fifteenth century there is a significant adoption of the word Europe in connection with the Turkish advance. In the face of Turkish threat "Christendom was virtually interchangeable with Europe for all the sixteenth century and for much of the seventeenth."<sup>17</sup>

For the famous English historian of the seventeenth century Richard Knolles, Turkish magnificence and the threat that it poses is a result of the judgment of the Almighty as well as the inability of Christians to unite since they are divided and fighting among themselves.<sup>18</sup> He portrays the Christian world as vulnerable to the Turks as long as they remain divided against the united Muslims. Writers like Abercromby or Botero emphasized that the aim of the Turks were to destroy Christianity, thus Christians should come together immediately and unite against the Turks.<sup>19</sup>

The faith in the unity of Christians was not broken during the Reformation. Common religious faith was still at the foundation of unity and constituted the essence of the Christian world. During this age of war and conflict, Christianity was still being perceived as the common faith and common heritage of the peoples of Europe. Religious wars were condemned on both sides as they were threatening the unity of Christians. Often they were perceived as civil wars. Protestant thinkers and strategists such as Luther and La Noue thought that God was punishing the Christians through the Turkish menace and so they were declaring that it is the common duty of all Christians to fight against the infidel. La Noue had a plan in which an army of Christians would attack the Ottoman Empire. If the Christians unite and save the Christian souls from the most evil servitude of the Turks then maybe God's punishment and wrath would come to an end he reasoned.<sup>20</sup> During this time the world was portrayed in polar terms: On the one side, there was the Christian world which represented peace and true faith; on the other side, there was the Turkish Empire which represented war and infidelity. The antagonism of Christian Europe and infidel Turks was repeatedly espoused.

A political strategist, the Duke of Rohan argued that the common interest of Christian princes were to unite and defend Europe against the Turks. For him, the diversity of religion ought not cause any diversity of opinion in things that concern the common good.<sup>21</sup> Henry Marsh invited the Christians to unite and get over the prevailing political and religious differences by stating that Europe is equal to the addition of the interests of Christian princes against the Turks.<sup>22</sup> Obviously, Christianity represented unity and commonness while Europe referred to political and religious diversity and differences. The most pronounced ideal of this age was to overcome this duality.

By the end of the seventeenth century, the concept of Christian unity was used alongside secular and political terms. Furthermore, the emphasis on religious faith was fading and eventually would become invisible into the eighteenth century. For instance, William Penn's *Peace Plan for Europe* (1693) identifies Europe as the Christian World while it invites Turks and Russians to take part in the prospective Parliament of Europe.<sup>23</sup> Interestingly, although the Turks and Russians were not considered as a part of the Christian world at the time, they are included into a Europe-wide political institution. Such a perspective is different than the one that is voiced on the mutually exclusive terms of Christian world versus the world of Muslims. Austrian victory at Lapanto in 1571 could be seen as a turning point in the history of European and Ottoman relations. From then onward it was repeatedly put forward that Turks were not invincible. In time, such a change in the Turkish image reflected in the decomposition of the European self-image as expressly Christian. The self-image of Christian Europe was constructed as a response to the threat posed by the Turks. This image told Europeans that they were weak and divided and not confident enough to fight against the Turks who were both stronger and united. Throughout the seventeenth century the comparisons made between the Europeans and the Turks portrayed the differences between these worlds not only as religious but also in terms of political and social life.<sup>24</sup> But I will not go into the details of those comparisons here in this study.<sup>25</sup>

### Liberal Europe

Secularization of political relations in Europe posed a challenge to the essentially Christian self-understanding of the European public. Interestingly the image of the Turks vis-à-vis the Europeans was undergoing a similar change. During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries what defined the European self-image vis-à-vis the Turks was handled as a matter of religious antagonism. However, in the eighteenth century one may observe that the idea of Europe based upon religious unity had dissolved and disintegrated. A new self-image was informing Europe and it was in terms of Europe (not in terms of Christianity) that the Europeans viewed the world.<sup>26</sup> This new self-image unlike the previous one did not depart from a matter of fact, which was that a large majority of people who lived in Western Europe were Latin Christians—but it was fed by a desire. A desire to become free that is to be free from arbitrary intrusion of government or from absolute power in general. From the end of the seventeenth Century onwards freedom becomes the ideal which represented the ultimate aspirations of European public opinion. In this sense, freedom also referred to the principle of the rule of law. The difference between Europeans and non-Europeans was classified and imagined as the one between those who are free and those live under servitude. There were of course some who assumed that they were free like the British, and some who desired to be free like the French. Nevertheless all were charmed by this ideal and emphasized the distinctness of being European. That is, they were convinced of the virtues of living under a government which is not absolute or arbitrary but limited. This govern-

ment is supposed to be based upon constitutional norms, which defined the authority and the privileges of the monarch as well as the nobility.

Throughout the eighteenth century the idea that there is an unbridgeable gap between Europe and the rest of the world became more and more pronounced, and the differences between European and the non-European ways were seen as a result of differences in social and political association and development patterns. Furthermore, Europe was assumed to be superior to non-European cultures. This is what we call Euro-centrism today, which is one of the most disputed versions of ethnocentrism. As Todorov defines it ethnocentrism is the kind of attitude in which we define our own local, cultural habits as the only correct and valid way of life without even providing excuses for it.<sup>27</sup> A universalistic ethnocentrist, however, would claim that in comparison to the values of other cultures, the values of his own culture are the only valid values.<sup>28</sup> The universalistic ethno-centrist would attempt to construct a rational basis for such a claim and he could only do this through deductive reasoning. As I will try to show in the following discussion of the eighteenth as well as the nineteenth century, European self-understanding is abound with this sort of universalistic ethnocentrism which I call Euro-centrism. In the eighteenth century, this attitude found its expression in the construction of the dichotomy of liberty, and despotism, both of which had many diverse connotations. To be free meant to be rational, industrious, dynamic, and progressive. To be despotic meant to be ignorant, lazy, superstitious, and oppressive. The ideal of freedom furnished the European self-image with all the positive characteristics, whereas all the negative characteristics that the Europeans wanted to avoid and even dread came to define the other—in this case the Turks. Montesquieu's *The Spirit of the Laws* (1749) has summed up and reflected such a Euro-centric understanding. With an enormous impact on European public opinion, this book contributed a great deal to the reconstruction of the European self-image that proved to be a more powerful image than that of Christian Europe. Throughout this period, in Denys Hays' terms Europe emerged as a symbol of a way of life.<sup>29</sup>

Montesquieu held that one could define the nature of any particular state, society, or individual with reference to an ahistorical constant criterion such as climate, soil, or religion. Despotism was exclusively defined as an Oriental regime to be encountered only in Asia. It corresponded to a warm climate zone. Despotic governments required the most passive obedience and the principle of this government is fear. As an effect of hot climate and religion in the east, people are characteristically timid, lazy, and ignorant. In short, they are slavish. In Europe or in colder climates, people become industrious, strong, vigorous, and they are zealous for their freedom.<sup>30</sup> Montesquieu assumed a moral distance separating east and west which is reflected in the dichotomy of despotism versus liberty. The images of the east came to represent those qualities that Europeans could not possibly have under the ahistorical constant criteria such as climate and soil. There is a demarcating line between Asia and Europe. Asia is weak because a servile spirit prevails there, whereas Europe is strong by virtue of its liberty. Pronouncing essential differences between the East and the West was

treated as a mission through which one could identify oneself and the others once and for all.

In fact, the duality of liberty and despotism had been discussed in French public opinion before Montesquieu's *Spirit of the Laws* was published. The argument was constructed as a criticism of the French monarchy, which was in these writings disguised as Turkish government. Pamphleteers would appear to criticize and ridicule the atrocities and corruption of the Turkish court while the real target was that of the French and Louis the fourteenth.<sup>31</sup> In these writings the contrast between despotism and liberty was seen as a political difference *par excellence*. With Montesquieu's reformulation this dichotomy came to signify contrasting ways of cultural, social and political lives. Montesquieu's formulation had become popular and so much debated throughout the Enlightenment that despotism was perceived as the antithesis of liberty, rule of law, and reason.<sup>32</sup>

The presentation of despotism as an extreme and exotic form of regime enabled the Enlightenment writers like Montesquieu to criticize its milder manifestations in Europe. The idea of despotism as an exotic regime also served these writers to champion those values and virtues that they believed would spare their societies from the burden of despotic rule. These writers held that Europe enjoyed the advantage of better climate and better laws and conventions that enabled political development. The concept of Oriental despotism was particularly significant and useful for those who wished to express their discontent with western forms of government. In this way the concept of despotism provided a rich source of polemic for those who desired to change their own political system in certain ways.

For instance Nicolas Boulanger, a faithful follower of Montesquieu pronounced the essential difference between east and west as the fact that Asians are socially and physically conditioned to be slavish, whereas the European learns from everything around him that he is a rational being.<sup>33</sup> In other words, the European is bound to be free since that is what his reason advises him to be. As an Enlightenment thinker he placed Europe in transition from slavery to freedom. He portrayed the ideal European character in the way he desired him to be, and by means of providing a derogatory image of the Oriental. As a controversial challenge to Montesquieu's widely accepted theory of Oriental despotism a lesser known political theorist S.N. Henri Linguet argued that all the governments in Europe but the Turks' were despotic.<sup>34</sup> A happy and peaceful Orient was of course only a fantasy similar to the corrupt and stagnant Orient. Not only Linguet and Montesquieu know about the actual political life of Ottomans but that was no interest to them. For both of them the depiction of Ottoman government was a safer way of demonstrating the absurdities and errors of arbitrary and absolute government.

The despotic image of the Ottoman Empire served the French to identify and criticize their own government. The image of Oriental despotism reflected the worst-case scenario for the revolutionary Frenchmen in the late eighteenth century. In fact, according to Thomas Kaiser, who studied the revolutionary discourse in France, this image was so strong and was so intensely discussed

that in 1789 it served the cause of freedom, which was being defended both against the internal and external enemies.<sup>35</sup> The image of Oriental despotism symbolized the claim of revolutionaries that France was ruled as despotically as the Ottoman Empire is ruled and that such an argument in fact crushed the old regime.

In post-revolutionary years, Count Volney, a deputy of the National Assembly of 1789 and an influential writer on the Middle East, argued that freedom is a natural law, and the Turks will never be free because they are condemned to live with the errors of despotism, prejudice and ignorance. However, Europeans desired their liberty and fought for it so that they are now free. For this reason, Europe is superior and those nations (mainly Arabs) that live under the despotic rule of the Turks should be emancipated.<sup>36</sup> It can be argued that Ottoman government and society were regarded as the counter image of a free society in which the rule of law prevails. The invention of the concept of Oriental despotism was accompanied by the development of the Enlightenment concern for good government, rule of law and freedom of the individual. English travelers to the Ottoman lands provided lively examples of despotism in their accounts that eventually substantiated the analysis made by Montesquieu. It is a well-known fact that Montesquieu was very much influenced by the English form of government. It is a lesser known fact that, at the same time, English writers and thinkers were under the influence of Montesquieu's classification of regimes to a great extent. They were convinced by the fictitious dichotomy of despotism and liberty as constructed in *the Spirit of Laws*.

In the second half of the eighteenth century, travelers displayed an interest in anticipating and establishing those conditions and features that enabled the Turks to endure a predefined despotic regime. A long time resident of Turkey, William Eton defined Turkish despotism in such a way that it simultaneously informed the European self-image as enlightened, rational, and free. Despotism in Turkey is "a power scorning the jurisdiction of reason, and forbidding the temerity of investigation, a power calculated to crush the growing energies of the mind and annihilating the faculties of man in order to insure his dependence."<sup>37</sup> Another long time resident of Turkey, Baron de Tott believes that despotism is a psychological feature of the Turkish people, which under the influence of climate and the belief system, propagates itself as a way of life and a political regime.<sup>38</sup> According to Tott's formulation of Turkish disposition, ferocity makes the rulers despotic while the servile spirit of the people and their blind obedience is grounded in their belief in predestination.<sup>39</sup> It was a common attitude among the travelers of this century to emphasize the ignorance of the Turks in connection with their apparent pride. They tend to observe an annoying and unfounded claim of superiority among the Turks.<sup>40</sup> Tott would summarize this belief as "Riches in India, Witt in Europe and Pomp among the Ottomans."<sup>41</sup> In this regard Lady Craven has pointed out that "perhaps . . . it is lucky for Europe that the Turks are idle and ignorant" otherwise they would become a formidable power against Europe, whereas at the moment they are vulnerable for invasion and foreign rule.<sup>42</sup>

Most of these observations based their analyses not on experience but on Montesquieu's theoretical framework. In this sense, a European self-image was constructed around the idea of freedom. In time, the ideal of freedom came to reflect a prejudice as a result of the taken for granted validity of the dichotomy between liberty and despotism. If Europeans had to be free, it was inevitable that someone had to be despotic! As political concepts, one informed the other. The European self-understanding charted a moral distance separating Asia from Europe in which the essentially free European was positioned against the decidedly slavish Oriental. Ottoman society generated a one-dimensional image, which was corrupt and stagnant. Such a negative image informed Europeans with various political and moral lessons. One of these lessons was that those who are practically free, i.e. rational, dynamic, and progressive, would also be the ones who are superior and civilized in the next century. Meanwhile the Oriental society displayed a variety of human errors, ignorance, and feebleness. This is the birth-place of Euro-centrism in European thought. In other words, one may characterize the period in which Europeans defined themselves vis-à-vis the Turks only on religious terms as an instance of ethnocentrism. The belief in Christianity as the only true faith is an example of ethnocentrism while the belief in the liberty of Europe and the slavishness of the Turks is an instance of universalistic ethnocentrism through which the liberty of Europeans is rationally established through deductive reasoning.

### Civilized Europe

The term civilization appeared in French and English dictionaries for the first time during the decade of the 1770s. The concept of civilization created a world in which many diverse philosophical approaches and theories have been constructed and contested in the nineteenth century. One may observe that the term civilization or civilized world referred to Europe or a European country and represented its success, progress and pride throughout the nineteenth century. According to the famous historian, Norbert Elias, the concept of civilization summed up the belief in the superiority of western societies, vis-a-vis the eastern as well as earlier societies.<sup>43</sup> It is through the term of civilization that western societies defined their own distinctive features or those characteristics that they were proud of.

Throughout the nineteenth century the idea of civilization was the basic criterion that defined the European self-image as superior and progressive when compared to eastern societies. In this period, one may observe two distinct attitudes toward the non-European peoples. On the one hand, it designated the geographical space that laid outside Europe, which was assumed to be available for various political economic and strategic uses. On the other hand, it designated the world in relation to which Europeans constructed their self-image.<sup>44</sup> Both of these attitudes defined Europe as a civilization that is both superior and stronger with respect to the rest of the world. The non-European world was reclassified and reinterpreted through the measuring stick of civilization. Throughout this era "If the Orient was orientalized, Europe had been Europeanized by the con-

struction of a unifying grid of civilization.”<sup>45</sup> The assumption that Europe represented the only civilized world justified and rationalized the imperialistic and colonial policies of the western countries. Eventually this century is stamped with a Euro-centric attitude. Europeans believed that they were exporting civilization through colonialism and imperialism. In this way the doctrines of civilization and progress were to be delivered to the primitive peoples of the world.<sup>46</sup>

What kind of prejudices served to justify the empowering self-image of Europe as civilized and the image of the rest of the world as uncivilized? What is the intellectual basis of such a justification? During this time those who believed in the doctrines of progress thought that there is a universal standard that enabled one to measure the level of civilization for any society. Such a standard is reached by the universal application of reason, regardless of limitations of time and space. The difference between the standard of civilization and the level of development of a given society was there as a result of ignorance, prejudice, and human error. In fact, for the Enlightenment thinkers, humanity could advance toward its ideal in a much faster pace through reform. The philosopher, Condorcet, constructed one of the distinguished doctrines of progress of his time. According to Condorcet, if the principles of reason are universal, then the laws should also be the same everywhere. He believed that through the application of reason, one could eliminate all the prejudices and all of the errors of humanity, all of which can be measured with the universal standard of reason.<sup>47</sup>

The idea that there are laws of history that direct the progress of mankind or determine the direction of societal change is a typical and distinctive assumption of nineteenth century social theory. Positivism, as developed by Saint Simon and August Comte, asserted that humanity could only progress by the application of scientific knowledge in all areas of life. The unscientific sources of knowledge such as traditional, cultural or religious should be abandoned in time. Positivism, its emphasis on science and progress, strengthened the claim of superiority and strength in the European self-understanding. Both Saint Simon and Comte believed that Europe was the home of the most advanced civilization. For this reason, it should expand and eventually develop other parts of the world along the lines of European civilization. They asserted that in order to contribute to the progress of mankind, European states should occupy and invade the rest of the world and a universal state should be constructed upon the model of Europe.<sup>48</sup>

One may also observe that throughout the nineteenth century the idea that the opposition between liberty and despotism, as founded upon natural causes, has been losing credibility and popularity.<sup>49</sup> In this age the concept of liberty came to be understood as closely related to the level of civilization and progress whereas despotism referred to stagnation and backwardness. That is to say that the errors of mankind can be measured by the standard of civilization. Despotic countries were the ones that diverted from the path of civilization. However these countries could become civilized through proper reform and education.

One of the most recurring themes of this century is the belief in the changeability or rather “malleability” of man.<sup>50</sup> It was suggested that there was no constancy in human nature and that human behavior is not determined by ahistorical

and constant criteria such as climate or soil. Instead we see the emergence of new doctrines that emphasize reform and the potential of transformation and change in human habits. One of the basic assumptions of this age is that human beings are positioned against unlimited possibilities and choices, and radical social change is possible and plausible so that crucial reforms or revolutions can take place in any society. One can encounter these assumptions in a variety of nineteenth century thinkers who are as diverse in approach as John Stuart Mill, Hegel, Marx, and Comte.

Under the light of the doctrines of progress and historicism, we see the development of a variety of theories on biological and social evolution or laws of history that all assumed the “malleability” of man or emphasized the plausibility of reform or revolution. In this way, the idea of civilization sometimes came to be connected to extremist doctrines. Departing from the theories of Darwin and Lamarck on evolution, the idea of adaptation to the physical environment and “survival of the fittest,” were used and abused to explain social evolution and consequently theories based on racial determinism emerged. In sum, the idea of civilization, while opposing unscientific dogmas, had established its own dogmas in the name of science and progress.

Instead of asserting the existence of different and diverse civilizations, the European self—image endorsed the idea of one civilization that is identified only in Europe. Such a civilization was assumed to perpetuate fecundity, growth, and development.<sup>51</sup> The image of civilized Europe becomes meaningful and significant when one considers the fact that it is constructed *vis-à-vis* the image of the primitive, backward barbarian or the corrupt and uncivilized Oriental. The most powerful and striking separation of Europe from the rest of the world took place in the nineteenth century with the development of the European self-image as possessing the only civilization on earth. It is in this age that the concepts of east and west, European and non-European were established as total opposites and as mutually exclusive.

I must emphasise that the three turning points I've delineated regarding European self-images—that is the Christian, the liberal and the civilized Europe—are indeed rather large generalizations or abstractions. One should not assume any internal consistency or coherence regarding these images as one would in a Saidian discourse analysis of Orientalism which defined both European self-image and the image of the Orientals.<sup>52</sup> Said's *Orientalism* critiques the categorization of the former as positive, superior and hegemonic, and the latter as decidedly negative and inferior in contrast. Said portrays the European understanding of the Orient as both unidirectional and one dimensional. The major weakness of this perspective is that it denies that the “experience of the east” had both negative and positive inputs in the construction of European self-image. In other words, knowledge of the East did not always reflect superiority of Europe nor serve self promotion, it also revealed weaknesses and led to self-criticism. For this reason one may not assume a one dimensional, consistently and continuously negative discourse, instead it should be recognized as diverse, complex and incoherent. As one may characterize the nineteenth century European self-image as emphasizing one superior civilization; during this

time one may also observe that the knowledge of Eastern civilizations played a critical role in European self-perceptions. The Romantic Movement provided a new basis for self-criticism and self-evaluation. Europeans came to question the superiority of their intellectual tradition and its uniqueness in the face of eastern systems of thought such as Buddhism, Taoism, Hinduism, and Confucianism.<sup>53</sup>

## Notes

1. I pursued certain points of this article in Turkish publications: Aslı Çırakman, "Avrupa Fikrinden Avrupa Merkezçiliğe" ("From the Idea of Europe to Eurocentrism") *Doğu Batı*, no. 14 (2001): 28-46, and "Hıristiyanlıktan Uygarlığa: Değişen Avrupa İmgeleri" ("From Christianity to Civilization: Changing Images of Europe") *Tophumsal Tarih*, no. 112 (April 2003): 34-39.
2. Gerard Delanty, *Inventing Europe: Idea, Identity, Reality* (London: Macmillan, 1995), 56.
3. Edward A. Stetner, ed., *Perspectives on Europe* (Cambridge: Schenkman, 1970): 23-45.
4. Stetner, ed, *Perspectives on Europe*, 14.
5. Oskar Halecki, *The Limits and Divisions of European History* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1950). Further examples that take European history, civilization, or tradition as a coherent and intelligible unit of analysis can be found in the following works: Oswald Spengler, *The Decline of the West*, Trans., Charles Francis Atkinson, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1989), 156; Arnold Toynbee, *The Study of Mankind*, 97; C. Dawson, *The Making of Europe*. For a criticism of the conception of European unity see Geoffrey Barraclough, *History in a Changing World* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1955), 31-45.
6. Halecki, *Limits and Divisions*, 8.
7. Halecki, *Limits and Divisions*, 17.
8. Halecki, *Limits and Divisions*, 50.
9. Halecki, *Limits and Divisions*, 189.
10. Halecki, *Limits and Divisions*, 52-53.
11. Halecki, *Limits and Divisions*, 188.
12. For further information on philosophical and cultural interactions between the east and the west see Raymond Schwab, *The Oriental Renaissance: Europe's Rediscovery of India and the East, 1680-1880* (78-89; Çev. G. Patterson (New York: Columbia University, Press, 1984); J. J. Clarke, *Oriental Enlightenment: The Encounters Between Asian and Western Thought* (New York: Routledge, 1997); Erdmute Heller, *Arabeskler ve Tılsımlar: Batı Kültüründe Doğu'nun Tarihi ve Öyküleri* Çev. Deniz Kırsımsoy Kucur (İmge: Ankara, 2000).
13. Henri Baudet, *Paradise on Earth: Some Thoughts on European Images of Non-European Man* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1965).
14. Stetner, ed., *Perspectives on Europe*, 5.
15. Denys Hay, *Europe: The Emergence of an Idea* (Edinburgh: 1968), 60.
16. Franklin Le Van Baumer, "The Conception of Christendom in Renaissance England," *Journal of History of Ideas* 6, no. 2, (1945): 132.
17. Hay, *Europe*, 115.
18. Richard Knolles, *The General Historie of the Turkes* (1603) (London, 1687-1700). Sig. A2v.
19. David Abercromby, *The Present State of the German and Turkish Empires* in Giovanni Botero, *The Reason of the State* (1589) (London: RKP, 1956), 222.

20. François de La Noue, *Politicke and Militarie Discourses of the Lord La Noue*. Trans. E. A. (London: 1589), 247.
21. Henri Rohan duc de, *Treatise of the Interests of the Princes and States of Christendome* (London: 1641), 44.
22. Henry Marsh, *A New Survey of the Turkish Empire. History and Government* (London: RKP, 1664), 59.
23. Baumer, "The Conception of Christendom in Renaissance England," 137.
24. There is an extensive travel literature regarding the social and political life of the Turks in this period. See for instance, Sir Paul Rycaut, *The Present State of the Ottoman Empire* (London: 1688), Jean Baptiste Tavernier, *The Six Voyages of J.B. Tavernier through Turkey into Persia and the East Indies*, Trans. J. (London: RKP, 1677), Jean Dumont, *A New Voyage to the Levant* (London: RKP, 1696).
25. For a detailed comparison see Ash Çırakman, *From "the Terror of the World" to "the Sick Man of Europe": European Images of Ottoman Empire and Society from the Sixteenth Century to the Nineteenth*, (New York: Peter Lang, 2002).
26. Hay, *Europe*, 117.
27. Tzvetan Todorov, *On Human Diversity: Nationalism Racism and Exoticism in French Thought*, Trans. Catherine Porter (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993), 1.
28. Todorov, *On Human Diversity*, 50.
29. Hay, *Europe*, 125.
30. Montesquieu, *The Spirit of the Laws*, Trans. Thomas Nugent (New York: Hafner, 1966), 266.
31. See *La Cour de France Turbanisée, et les Trahisons Demasqueés* (Cologne: 1686), Hubert Gillot, *Le Regne de Louis XIV et l'Opinion Publique en Allemagne* (Paris: 1914), J. W. Van Malssen, *Louis XIV d'après les pamphlets repandus en Hollande* (Paris and Amsterdam: 1937).
32. Patricia Springborg, *Western Republicanism and the Oriental Prince* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1992).
33. Nicolas Antoine Boulanger, *The Origin and Progress of Despotism in the Oriental and Other Empires of Africa, Europe and America*, Trans. John Wilkes, (Amsterdam and London: RKP, 1764), 8.
34. Henri Linguet, *Du Plus Heureux Gouvernement ou parallele des constitutions politiques de l'Asie avec celles d'Europe* (London: 1774) cilt 1. 7-11.
35. Thomas Kaiser, "The Evil Empire? The Debate on Turkish Despotism in Eighteenth Century French Political Culture," *Journal of Modern History*, 72 (March 2000), 15.
36. Constantin Francois Volney, *The Ruins or a Survey of the Revolutions of Empires to which is Added the Laws of Nature* (London: RKP, 1845), 22; 56-57.
37. William Eton, *A Survey of the Turkish Empire* (London: RKP, 1789) 16-17. For a similar definition see William Hunter, *Travels in the Year 1792 through France Turkey, Hungary to Vienna* (London: RKP, 1798), 387.
38. Francis Baron de Tott, *Memoirs of the Baron de Tott on the Turks and Tartars Volume I* (London: 1785), 7-8.
39. Tott, *Memoirs*, 76.
40. Hunter, *Travels*, 353; Eton, *A Survey of the Turkish Empire*, 12.
41. Tott, *Memoirs*, 273.
42. Elizabeth Craven, *A Journey through Crimea to Constantinople in a Series of Letters Written in the Year 1776*, (London: RKP, 1789), 272.
43. Norbert Elias, *The Civilizing Process* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1994), 3.

44. Henri Baudet, *Paradise on Earth: Some Thoughts on European Images of Non-European Man*, Trans. Elizabeth Wenhett (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1965), 55.
45. Stuart Woolf, "The Construction of a European World-view in the Revolutionary-Napoleonic Years," *Past and Present*, no. 137, (November 1992), 89.
46. Woolf, "The Construction of a European World-view," 79.
47. Jean Antoine Condorcet, *Sketch for a Historical Picture of the Progress of the Mankind* (Westport, Conn.: Hyperion Press, 1973).
48. For further discussion of this idea regarding ethnocentrism see Todorov, *On Human Diversity*, 25-31.
49. Clarence J. Glacken, *Traces on the Rhodian Shore: Nature and Culture in Western Thought from Ancient Times to the End of the Eighteenth Century* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1990), 584.
50. For a detailed study of this issue see Maurice Mandelbaum, *History, Man and Reason: A Study in Nineteenth-Century Thought* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1974), 141-269.
51. Glacken, *Traces on the Rhodian Shore*, 624.
52. Edward Said, *Orientalism*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1979).
53. For further information see Raymond Schwab, *The Oriental Renaissance*, 45; and J. J. Clarke, *Oriental Enlightenment*.