

THE PSYCHOPOLITICS OF THE ORIENTAL FATHER

BETWEEN OMNIPOTENCE AND EMASCULATION

STUDIES IN THE PSYCHOSOCIAL

BÜLENT SOMAY



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The Psychopolitics of the Oriental Father

Between Omnipotence and Emasculation

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Istanbul Bilgi University, Turkey

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*For my mother,
the exemplary 'Republican sister'
who wouldn't have approved but nevertheless understood*

*And for 301 coal miners
who were killed in a mining 'accident' in Soma, Turkey,
on 13 May 2014,
showing us once more that it was class against class
and not tradition against modernity or East against West*

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Foreword: If Praying and Shopping Is Not Enough, Read This Book!

John Jay Chapman (1862–1933), a half-forgotten US political activist and essayist, wrote about political radicals:

The radicals are really always saying the same thing. They do not change; everybody else changes. They are accused of the most incompatible crimes, of egoism and a mania for power, indifference to the fate of their own cause, fanaticism, triviality, want of humor, buffoonery and irreverence. But they sound a certain note. Hence the great practical power of consistent radicals. To all appearance nobody follows them, yet everyone believes them. They hold a tuning-fork and sound A, and everybody knows it really is A, though the time-honored pitch is G flat. The community cannot get that A out of its head. Nothing can prevent an upward tendency in the popular tone so long as the real A is kept sounding.¹

One should emphasise here the moment of passivity and immobility: in Kierkegaard's terms, a radical is not a creative genius but an apostle who just embodies and delivers a truth—he just goes on and on with repeating the same message ('class struggle goes on'; 'capitalism engenders antagonisms'; etc.), and although it may appear that nobody follows him, everyone believes him; that is, everybody secretly knows he is telling the truth—which is why he is constantly accused 'of the most incompatible crimes, of egoism and a mania for power, indifference to the fate of their own cause, fanaticism, triviality, want of humour, buffoonery and irreverence'. And what this means is that, in the choice between dignity and the risk of appearing a buffoon, a true political radical easily renounces dignity.

Somay's book is a lesson in how such a buffoonery can function as an act of radical subversion. Among other examples, he mentions the weird incident which occurred in the Kemalist Turkey in 1926. Part of the Kemalist project of modernisation was to enforce new 'European' models for women, for how they should dress, talk and act, in order to get rid of the oppressive Oriental traditions—as is well known, there

indeed was a 'Hat Law' prescribing how men and women, at least in big cities, should cover their heads. Here is a passage from Somay's book:

[...] in Erzurum in 1926 there was a woman among the people who were executed under the pretext of 'opposing the Hat Law'. She was a very tall (almost 2 m) and very masculine-looking woman who peddled shawls for a living (hence her name '*Şalçı Bacı*' ['Shawl Sister']). Reporter Nimet Arzık described her as, 'two meters tall, with a sooty face and snakelike thin dreadlocks [...] and with manlike steps'. Of course, as a woman she was not supposed to wear the fedora, so she could not have been 'guilty' of anything, but probably in their haste the gendarmes mistook her for a man and hurried her to the scaffold. *Şalçı Bacı* was the first woman to be executed by hanging in Turkish history. She was definitely not 'normal' since the description by Arzık does not fit in any framework of feminine normalcy at that particular time, and she probably belonged to the old tradition of tolerated and culturally included 'special people' with some kind of genetic 'disorder'. The coerced and hasty transition to 'modernity', however, did not allow for such an inclusion to exist, and therefore she had to be eliminated, crossed out of the equation. 'Would a woman wear a hat that she be hanged?' were the last words she was reported to have muttered on the way to the scaffold. Apart from making no sense at all, these words represented a semantic void and only indicated that this was definitely a scene from the Real, subverting the rules of semiotics: she was first emasculated (in its primary etymological sense of 'making masculine'), so that she could be 'emasculated'.

How are we to interpret this weird and ridiculously excessive act of killing? The obvious reading would have been a Butlerian one: through her provocative trans-sexual appearance and acting, *Şalçı Bacı* rendered visible the contingent character of sexual difference, of how it is symbolically constructed—as such, she was a threat to normatively established sexual identities. My reading is slightly (or not so slightly) different: rather than undermining sexual difference, *Şalçı Bacı* stood for this difference as such, in its traumatic Real, irreducible to any clear symbolic opposition; her disturbing appearance transforms clear symbolic difference into the impossible-Real of an antagonism.

But Somay is no less aware of how obscenity can also function as the ultimate hidden support of the state power. The royal example is here provided again by the Kemalist regime in Turkey, this time by

Mustafa Kemal Atatürk himself, the founding father of the modern Turkey. On 25 April 1915, before the battle with the British-Australian forces on the Gallipoli peninsula, Atatürk told his troops: 'I don't order you to fight, I order you to die. In the time it takes us to die, other troops and commanders can come and take our places.' This 'passion to die' is the last great example of the Thermopilae-Alamo logic of consciously sacrificing oneself to enable one's forces to regroup for the decisive battle, the last great temptation to be resisted, the last mask in which a non-ethical attitude disguises itself as ethics itself. During the long rule of Kemal Atatürk, the 'father' of modern Turkey, from the end of the First World War till his death in 1938, there was a persistent rumour among the Turks that, in contrast to his official image of ascetic leader working night and day for his country, he was a great serial seducer, sleeping with the wives of all his collaborators. However, those in the know claim that, at least from mid-1920s onwards, the real Atatürk was having sexual function problems due to excessive drinking and his preferences were mostly in the other direction—the rumour about his serial seductions was a carefully propagated official myth. The interesting feature is here that, although this rumour was officially denied (one was even in danger of being severely punished for talking too much about Atatürk's sexual promiscuity), it was discreetly propagated by the very authorities who ruthlessly punished those who besmirched Atatürk's official image by spreading stories about his erotic adventures, and it played a crucial role in sustaining Atatürk's aura. One can easily imagine an embarrassing situation in Turkey in 1930: at a public meeting, an official Kemalist speaker attacks those who spread filthy rumours about the leader's promiscuity; an unknown man from the public stands up and fully supports the speakers, emphasising how everyone knows that rumours about Atatürk's sexual prowess are utterly false—although he only confirmed what the official speaker claimed, he thereby denied the obscene obverse of the official ideology. That is to say, when the official speaker was attacking rumours about Atatürk, everyone knew that he did that just *pro forma*, effectively confirming their truth as something that one should not talk about in public.

But Somay's book reaches its high point in its final pages which describe and provide an outstanding analysis of the mass protests in Turkey which threaten to undermine Prime Minister Erdoğan's Islamist regime. The motto that united the Turks who protested on Taksim Square and the adjoining Gezi Park in the heart of Istanbul was

‘Dignity!’—a good but ambiguous slogan. The term ‘dignity’ is appropriate insofar as it makes it clear that protests are not just about particular material demands, but about the protesters’ freedom and emancipation. In the case of the Taksim Square protests, the call for dignity did not refer only to corruption and cheating; it was also and crucially directed against the patronising ideology of the Turkish prime minister. The direct target of the Gezi Park protests was neither neo-liberal capitalism nor Islamism, but the personality of Erdoğan: the demand was for *him* to step down. Why? Which of his features was considered so annoying that it made him the target of secular educated protesters as well as of anti-capitalist Muslim youth, the object of a hatred which fused them together? Here is Bülent Somay’s explanation:

Everybody wanted *PM Erdoğan* to resign. Because, many activists explained both during and after the Resistance, he was constantly meddling with their lifestyles, telling women to have at least three children, telling them not to have C-sections, not to have abortions, telling people not to drink, not to smoke, not to hold hands in public, to be obedient and religious. He was constantly telling them what was best for them (‘shop and pray’). This was probably the best indication of the neo-liberal (‘shop’) soft-Islamic (‘pray’) character of the JDP rule: Erdoğan’s utopia for Istanbul (and we should remember that he was the Mayor of Istanbul for four years) was a huge shopping mall and a huge mosque in Taksim Square and Gezi Park. He had become ‘Daddy knows best’ in all avenues of life, and tried to do this in a clumsy patronising disguise, which was quickly discarded during Gezi events to reveal the profoundly authoritarian character behind the image.

Is ‘shop and pray’ not a perfect late-capitalist version of the old Christian *ora et labora*, with the identity of a worker (toiling peasant) replaced by a consumer? The underlying wager is, of course, that praying (a codename for the fidelity to old communal traditions) makes us even better ‘shoppers’; that is, participants in the global capitalist market. However, the call for dignity is not only a protest against such a patronising injunction to ‘shop and pray’; dignity is also the appearance of dignity, and in this case the demand for dignity means that I want to be duped and controlled in such a way that proper appearances are maintained, that I don’t lose face—is this not a key feature of our democracies? Walter Lippmann, the icon of US journalism in

the 20th century, played a key role in the self-understanding of the US democracy; in *Public Opinion* (1922),² he wrote that a 'governing class' must rise to face the challenge; he saw the public as Plato did, a great beast or a bewildered herd—floundering in the 'chaos of local opinions'. So the herd of citizens must be governed by 'a specialized class whose interests reach beyond the locality'—this elite class is to act as a machinery of knowledge that circumvents the primary defect of democracy, the impossible ideal of the 'omni-competent citizen'. This is how our democracies function—with our consent. There is no mystery in what Lippmann was saying, it is an obvious fact; the mystery is that, knowing it, we play the game. We act *as if* we are free and freely deciding, silently not only accepting but even *demanding* that an invisible injunction (inscribed into the very form of our free speech) tells us what to do and think. As Marx knew it long ago, the secret is in the form itself. In this sense, in a democracy, every ordinary citizen effectively is a king—but a king in a constitutional democracy, a king who only formally decides, whose function is to sign measures proposed by executive administration. This is why the problem of democratic rituals is homologous to the big problem of constitutional democracy: how to protect the dignity of the king? How to maintain the appearance that the king effectively decides, when we all know this is not true? What we call 'crisis of democracy' does not occur when people stop believing in their own power, but, on the contrary, when they stop trusting the elites, those who are supposed to know for them and provide the guidelines, when they experience the anxiety signalling that 'the (true) throne is empty', that the decision is now *really* theirs. There is thus in 'free elections' always a minimal aspect of politeness: those in power politely pretend that they do not really hold power, and ask us to freely decide if we want to give them power—in a way which mirrors the logic of a gesture meant to be refused. So, back to Turkey, is it only this type of dignity that the protesters want, tired as they are of the primitive and openly direct way they are cheated and manipulated? Is their demand 'We want to be cheated in a proper way, make at least an honest effort to cheat us without insulting our intelligence!', or is it really more? If we aim at more, then we should be aware that the first step of liberation is to get rid of the appearance of false freedom and to openly proclaim our un-freedom. Say, the first step towards feminine liberation is to throw off the appearance of the respect for women and to openly proclaim that women are oppressed—today's master, more than ever, does not want to appear as master.³

From these brief notes, one can already see that Somay's book is much more than an excellent social and psychoanalytic examination of the impasses of the modernisation of Turkey. I learned from it nothing less than how ideology effectively works in today's global world order. So, not just those interested in Turkey but EVERYONE should read the book.

Slavoj Žižek

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Introduction: L'Orient n'existe pas

The 'clash of civilisations' and the asymmetrical contest between the Occident and the Orient have always been the subject matter of much theorising, speculation, research and learned and not-so-learned arguments. Until the end of the 20th century, this contest and the opinions and discussions thereof were an important but limited part of so-called Western thought, and a considerable, almost obsessive, part of Oriental ideologies. The 21st century and its 'grand opening' of the 11 September 2001 attack on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon radically changed all this: the West was now totally obsessed with the *Islamic* East, not only theoretically, but also as a matter of life and death, mirroring the obsession of the East prior to that event. The term 'Orient' also shifted meaning and came to refer to 'Islamic East', almost totally bypassing non-Muslim China and Japan, throwing a cursory glance at Russia (not 'communist' anymore), and showing only an ounce of interest in India insofar as it was partly Muslim. Almost the entirety of Western thought concerning the Orient was to be overhauled and pushed to the centre stage in order to justify this reversal. The Western media seemed to gather all narratives, myths and plots formerly used in anti-Semitism and reshuffle them with a twist in order to lay down a foundation for the current Islamophobia. The Islamic/Oriental population living in Western countries had their share of this enhanced interest and anxiety as well. There was a marked increase in racist attacks on these people, especially veiled Muslim women, as well as discriminatory practices by some European governments, such as the ban on *hijab* in France and Switzerland and the prohibition of minarets in the latter, not to mention the almost catastrophic consequences of the US Patriot Act of 2002.¹

Things got even more complicated with the so-called 'Arab Spring', the serial uprisings against the self-styled absolute rulers (military or

otherwise) throughout North Africa, toppling old regimes but not able (or willing) to replace them with 'Western-style' democracies. Western intelligentsia tried to make sense of these events by drawing parallels with the Occupy Movement, the Spanish *indignados* and the Greek riots since 2008, and failing to find a coherent causal/structural connection, even attempted to go as far back as the 1960s movements for an Occidental model. Summer 2013 in Turkey created another tricky predicament for Western thought, since this time the rebellious movement (the Gezi Commune) was directed towards a duly elected (that is, Western-approved) 'democratic' government, but still not exactly analogous to the ones taking place in the West. In the end, the Western political system played the ambiguous part of an accessory in the military coup in Egypt while speaking out loud for democracy, or in the lynching of Colonel Muammar Qaddafi while speaking of human rights, and the part of the totally paralysed bystander in the civil war in Syria. The Western intelligentsia could not make heads or tails about how they became, willingly or not, supporters in the uncanny events of the dismembering of one primordial Father (Qaddafi), and the making of another (Turkish Prime Minister Erdoğan), in his gradual transformation from a soft-Islamic, Western-approved politician to an omnipotent Father.

In short, it becomes apparent that very little fruitful and constructive thinking can be expected from the West in the matter of the transformations that the Asiatic and African populations are going through, since, as Frank Herbert has very neatly suggested in *Dune*, 'Fear is the mind killer.'² Driven by fear, anxiety and paranoia, the Western *ratio* is partly paralysed and almost entirely unable to produce any rational arguments (much less policies) about the escalating tension between the East and the West (and *within* the East), not to mention the series of transformations and 'revolutions' the Middle-East is experiencing. Without Western help, the Orient seems to be stuck with the option to take the initiative and try to understand and rationally evaluate the actual dynamics of the current situation. It cannot, however, be content to reiterate a critique of Orientalism, colonialism, neo-colonialism or imperialism anymore, as it did for most of the 20th century. Oriental criticism has to start with the self-critique of the Orient, in the mirror, so to speak, if it is going to have any semantic value and political credibility at all.

Any attempt to look *at* the Orient *from* the Orient has to start from a critique of so-called 'modernisation' (alternately called 'Westernisation' and 'Europeanisation', even in some cases simply 'development') from

the 18th through to the 21st century, a process either willingly or grudgingly accepted by most Asiatic and African cultures and civilisations. This, however, is too broad a scope for a single study to cover, both spatially and temporally, so I will try to limit the core of my arguments to encompass two stages: in the first stage I will be dealing with the *non-colonial Oriental spaces*, namely Russia/the Soviet Union (USSR) and the Ottoman Empire/Turkish Republic in the 19th and 20th centuries; in the second stage I will further focus my attention on the late 19th-/early 20th-century Ottoman Empire/Turkey, with a final section on the late 20th-/early 21st-century 'return of the repressed', in order to verify what I hypothesised so far, this time retroactively.

My main hypothesis is that 'modernisation', 'Westernisation', 'Europeanisation' and 'development' are merely euphemisms for the advent of capitalism in the so-called 'Orient',³ and that although capitalism was definitely *one* of the 'developmental' options of the Asiatic and African civilisations, European civilisation, in its endeavour to present itself as the *sole* option (and, therefore, as a kind of *telos*), had first to create the Orient/Occident dimorphism (in order to eliminate all other options, actual or imaginary) and eventually to shape it into a rigid duality consisting of mutually exclusive *performances*. I will, however, only dwell upon the historical/cultural aspects of this process rather than the politico-economical, the analysis of which necessitates a critical assessment of the history of capitalist development from its origins in European mercantilist capitalism into a global world order; again, something clearly beyond the scope of this book.

1. Psycho-cultural analysis

I use a psychoanalytical paradigm and a psycho-cultural analytic methodology in the overall theoretical structure of my analysis, which needs to be justified from the outset. When I say 'psychoanalysis', I mean a methodological/epistemological tool of looking at/observing phenomena, a *theory* (*theoria*, *Anschauung*),⁴ rather than a 'science', a discipline of individual psychology or a method of healing. It may (or may not) be any or all of these, but this is not my main concern in this study: I will not comment on the usefulness of psychoanalysis as a technique of treatment, nor will I try to address the Popperian argument about the 'scientificity' of psychoanalysis as regards its falsifiability. What I will be trying to establish is that psychoanalytical concepts and terminology are as deeply rooted in culture, mythology, history, literature, anthropology and even archaeology (insofar as these may be treated as *narratives*)

as they are in individual psychology. Employing psychoanalytical concepts in these disciplines is not simply a metaphoric endeavour, using psychoanalytical 'established facts' to explain historical and cultural phenomena; it is rather the other way around (or, more accurately, it is *both ways around*).

When Freud 'invented' the Oedipus complex, for instance, he was referring to mythology, literature and anthropology at the same time. It was not that he made an extensive 'field study' of infants and *measured* their affection towards their mothers and resentment towards their fathers, arrived at quantifiable, methodologically significant results, and *only after that* named his findings in a witty reference to Classical Greek tragedy. It was the other way around: he was one of the few people who dared question the unnamed and unnameable, namely the incest taboo (especially the one about mother-child incest), etched into every cultural structure so deeply that it always seemed self-evident, so much so that religious narratives and legal texts did not even bother to mention it. Anthropologically speaking, the incest taboo goes so far back into history that it is almost impossible to make positive statements about it without having to fall back mostly on speculation, on what Freud would later call *metapsychology*. So he did the next best thing: he constructed a *reciprocally metaphoric model*, in which individual mental traits, disorders and structures would serve as metaphors for historical/mythological cultural structures, and vice versa.

We can observe the same endeavour in the construction of the single-most central concept, the defining axiom of psychoanalysis, the unconscious (*das Unbewusste: the unknown*). An individual unconscious is inconceivable without a cultural/historical unconscious, a fact that Jung partially perceived but also mystified in his trademark concept 'collective unconscious'. Lacan's famous statement that 'the unconscious is structured like a language' can also be construed as another instance of a psychoanalytic reciprocal metaphor: language and the unconscious are inconceivable without each other, since for *an unknown* to exist, there have to be systematised *practices of knowing* and subjects who 'know', so that it will be possible to define a locus that remains outside the 'known' domain. Without the cultural synchronic context, therefore, without the texture that is made possible by language, and without the historical diachronic narratives, the constructed sequentiality of events that convey this context, there can be no individual unconscious. Conversely, it is only through the agency of individual unconsciouses (*die Unbewußten*), that the historical/cultural unconscious can make itself manifest and indicate what is not yet and/or not anymore known.

A narrative employing psychoanalytic epistemology, then, to discover hitherto unrecognised semantic content in sociocultural phenomena in a historical perspective could more accurately be called *psycho-cultural analysis*; the same is also true for a narrative employing the same epistemology to discover meanings in individual psychic structures and acts. Attempts at psycho-cultural analysis have been present in social and human sciences (and, indeed, in psychoanalysis itself) since the early days of psychoanalysis, in the tentative forays of Jung and Reich (and even more directly in Freud himself) into mythology, culture and politics. The 'scientific world' of academia, however, in its jealous defence of the strict disciplinary/disciplined, compartmentalised structure of 'scientific' endeavour, was quick to discredit them from the outset, using Jung's extreme mysticism and Reich's extravagance in matters of sexual morality (and his eventual lapse into psychosis) as pretexts, while domesticating Freudianism as one school of psychology/psychotherapy among many.

Since then, psycho-cultural analytic theory has constantly tried to find a niche for itself in academia, sometimes in the form of a school of thought (e.g. within the auspices of the 'Critical Theory' of the Frankfurt School), sometimes trying to invade a pre-existing discipline (e.g. anthropology in the 1960s and 1970s), but mostly inventing or joining in the construction of new transdisciplinary spaces (e.g. cultural studies, gender studies, film studies, queer studies, postcolonial studies, Oriental studies, etc.). Most of these endeavours ended up in the establishment (or re-establishment) of a (new) discipline, complete with its own border patrols and customs services, undermining transdisciplinarity and driving psycho-cultural theory back into the no man's land between borders, or back into the domain of psychoanalysis. Psychoanalysis, however, especially in the US where it has mostly been rigidified into a therapeutic school within the medical profession with its own border patrols and customs services, is usually reluctant to accept this prodigal son back into the fold. Although there are significant exceptions to this trend in psychoanalytic practice, the fragmentation of the field into rival and sometimes hostile sub-schools has made it difficult for psycho-cultural theory to find itself a refuge there.

Psychosocial studies, as one of the latest instances of transdisciplinary endeavour in academia, not yet calcified into still another 'discipline', is perhaps one of the best safe havens psycho-cultural analytic theory could find today. Furthermore, it promises to retain its transdisciplinary structure longer than most, as indicated in its name and definition, asserting the inseparability of the individual

psyche from the sociocultural context, trans-referencing psychoanalysis and social/cultural/historical analysis as reciprocal preconditions. As it stands now, an inquiry into the cultural/historical unconscious of non-colonial Oriental spaces, into how the so-called Oriental subject was structured and split in the passage to capitalism is well within the domain of psychosocial studies, and this is precisely what I will be trying to achieve in this book.

2. Psychoanalysis goes East

Of course, there still remains the question of the ‘applicability’ of psychoanalytic theory, or any psycho-cultural methodological approach to ‘Oriental’ phenomena, since this theory is most definitely ‘Occidental’ in history, practice and semantic structure. This problem has haunted many academics, writers and theorists, as soon as they attempt to leave the safe haven of meticulously delimited disciplines with deterministic structures and standardised methodologies, and venture into the nebulous domain of so-called meta-narratives: most Marxist, feminist and psychoanalytic endeavours concerning Oriental cultures and societies are usually hampered by this very problem. Does psychoanalysis have a meaningful impact on Oriental or postcolonial studies? Is the feminist paradigm useful in comprehending and negotiating the social and cultural position of Oriental women? Is the Marxist conception concerning the transformation of social structures semantically functional when applied to the Orient?

Most of us (from the ‘Rest of the World’, that is⁵) who approach the problem of Asiatic/Oriental cultures and history with a Marxist, psychoanalytic or feminist methodology, usually feel that something is ‘off’ in the tools we have in hand. We feel that they do apply, in a general sense, *but not exactly*. The most widespread reaction to this sense of vague inadequacy is to ‘doctor’ the data in hand to a certain extent, to manipulate it ever so slightly to ‘fit’ the theory. This, of course, is the classical Procrustean approach, and in the long run it never produces fully meaningful results—only articles, essays, books, theses and, most dangerous of all, ‘political strategies’ in abundance, with little actual and fruitful significance. Thus, the Ottoman Empire, for instance, where there was no private property in land (except, maybe, for its last century, and even then only to a certain extent), becomes a ‘feudal society’, so that it could ‘fit’ the pseudo-Marxian scheme of feudal society preceding the capitalist one. Worse still, all Asiatic societies of antiquity become ‘slave’ societies *en masse*, although they do not use slave labour

as such in the actual process of production, because according to the same scheme a slave society *has to* precede the feudal one. This course is followed by many socialists and feminists in the 'Third World', too content with themselves in having found a master key that fits every possible situation (including their own), and too lazy or single-minded to elaborate on the subtleties of particular histories and localities, not to mention the psychoanalysts who 'analyse' by assigning ready-made diagnostic tools to individuals.

The opposite reaction, on the other hand, is to blame the theory itself in every apparent discrepancy and declare it defunct on the grounds that it fails to 'explain' *everything*; namely, what has happened and continues to happen in the Eastern side of the Orient/Occident divide. In this approach, the Orient and the Occident are considered to be *essentially* different, and any meta-narrative concocted in the West has no applicability at all to the Orient. The underlying motivation(s) for such wholesale rejections may be diverse: it is definitely an expedient way to reject once and for all the meta-narratives like Marxism, feminism and psychoanalysis, which are fundamentally subversive. Another reason for rejecting these 'Western' theories may be an attempt to restore the hurt pride of the Orient, coerced and intimidated by centuries of European colonial and imperialist policies, by making a claim to *uniqueness*. Again, there may be many examples of this attitude, but the best story that comes to mind is the meeting between Zeki Velidi Togan⁶ and Sigmund Freud in 1935:

While I was studying in Vienna during 1935, I had rented a room on Berggasse No. 9 [...] One day, the landlady said 'The residents below you are complaining of your very hard steps at night. Could you wear slippers?'⁷ I agreed but kept forgetting, and the request was repeated. One evening, the landlady said 'The Professor is asking for you.' This person introduced himself as Professor Freud and said there were sensitive instruments in his institute, and because of that, repeatedly requested that I wear slippers in my room if possible. [...] I had never seen Freud before. However, a Syrian Armenian student, said to be working under this Freud, had given me books by him. I had read some of them but had not liked his philosophy at all. I responded to Freud with 'I am a person who had arrived from the vastness of Central Asia. I wonder if I could have my feet comply with this stipulation.' Freud invited me to his room. There, I told Freud that his writings pertaining to a girl of six to seven years of age lusting after her father [were] inapplicable to the Bashkurts and

Kazakhs. [...] During our second conversation, [...] I even said to him ‘With your conversion of psychoanalysis into your “philosophy,” which is an important and interesting branch of knowledge, you are providing material to the “perverts” who unabashedly write about watching their naked sisters through keyholes.’

(Togan, cited in Paksoy 1998, pp. 197–198)

Togan, who was an important figure in the so-called ‘Oriental awakening’ of the first half of the 20th century, was thus categorically opposed to Freud’s ‘philosophy’ on the grounds that it was ‘inapplicable’ to Turkic peoples. He did, however, accept in the second conversation that there were indeed ‘perverts who unabashedly write about watching their naked sisters through keyholes’; and that Freud was simply providing material for them. Needless to say, these two observations tend to refute each other, since one denies the existence of a phenomenon (incestuous desire) while the other accepts its existence but morally renounces it. Togan thus attempts to have his cake and eat it at the same time, camouflaging his moralistic rejection with a pseudo-objective assertion of an *essential* difference between East and West, an attitude not much different from that of the European critics of Freud in the early 20th century. Admittedly, the fierce reaction to Freud among European medical circles had other pseudo-objective (yet equally moralistic) excuses than a mere assertion of an essentialist cultural difference, but it still indicated that the rejection of the subversive content of psychoanalysis was not much different on either side of the Orient/Occident divide.

To sum up, my principal hypothesis will be that psychoanalysis *is* applicable to the Orient, not necessarily through its assumptions mostly derived from European culture, mythology and literature, but as a more universal *theory* of psychic/sexual construction that cuts across the Orient/Occident divide. This theory is universal in the sense that it is based upon the critique of: (i) the coercive monogamy of women, providing every living person with a mother *and* a father; (ii) the incest taboo, facilitating the Oedipal structuring of every psyche; and (iii) the central position of the phallus in language and in every existing social structure, facilitating patriarchy, or father domination, as the determining basic rule of civilisation as we know it. In these three criteria, the Orient is not conceivably different from the Occident, so psychoanalytic theory is applicable to Asiatic and African cultures. This, however, is only an elementary hypothesis: the more significant (and in the long run theoretically more rewarding) task is to use a psychoanalytical paradigm

and methodology to comprehend the fundamental (but not *essential*) *differences* between the Orient and the Occident, which are gradually getting to be the central questions around which the present 'discontents' in 'civilisation' accumulate.

3. The West as a failed utopia

The hypothesis that 'modernisation', 'Westernisation', 'Europeanisation' and 'development' (economic or otherwise) were all used as euphemistic signifiers for the advancement of capitalism, also indicates that they have little to do with their root concepts 'modern', 'Western', 'European' and 'developed'. Since all these terms entered Oriental cultural structures and intellectual life as external factors, conceptualised, defined and put into circulation by either colonial or patronising European powers, the Oriental cultures that are supposed to modernise, Westernise, Europeanise or 'develop' had little say in what they were supposed to mean.

Consequently, a huge and nebulous confusion in the Orient ensued. For some, modernity meant a neat three-piece suit, a necktie and the ability to quote Shakespeare at will. For others, it was the 'free market', huge amounts of profit and nothing else; yet for others it was the full institutional structure of a formal democracy. Likewise, where the 'West' and/or Europe represented Classical Greek culture and philosophy for some, for others they represented the Renaissance and a proliferation of visual arts (something rarely experienced in the Islamic Orient); furthermore, for others they represented the technological marvels of the 19th and 20th centuries. Everybody wanted some of them, but never all of them, and combinations and permutations (depending on the priorities) that emerged were almost as varied as there were people. Furthermore, everybody wanted some of them only at specific times and under specific circumstances: the 'technological marvels', for example, were not as desirable in the form of advanced weapons used *against* Asiatic and African countries.⁸ For those who interpreted 'Western thought' as something culminating in socialism and Marxism, the 'free market' was reactionary and 'non-modern'. Conversely, the liberals and neo-liberals who sincerely believed in the Fukuyaman 'End of History', thought socialism to be pre-historic and consequently pre-modern.

This almost wholesale eclecticism became typical of most Westernist Oriental thought, and eventually it became almost as typical for the so-called 'authentic' or traditionalist Oriental ideologies, since all these 'authentic' modes of thought were regenerated as responses to