

IS THERE AN EASTERN CIVILIZATION?

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ABSTRACT

Contemporary Western philosophy has entered a new phase in which contrasting opinions of currents such as pragmatism, existentialism, phenomenology, structuralism and post-structuralism are sometimes blended. Beside the philosophers influenced by Eastern philosophy to a certain extent like Friedrich Nietzsche, Rene Guenon, and Martin Heidegger, some thinkers have dealt with Chinese-Indian-Japanese philosophies for a long time comparing those philosophies with western philosophy. Alparslan Açıkgenç an academician from Turkey assumes that the civilizations emerged through the peoples' "worldviews". For him the difference of the civilizations come from different "worldviews". Only the transparent worldviews that are universalized can build civilizations. There are only three universalized worldviews therefore there are three civilizations. In this paper we shall try to show that there are more than three civilizations even on the basis of Açıkgenç's own theory. It will be stated that "yoga" is a "science" even by Açıkgenç's criteria and east has its own civilization.

Keywords: Worldview, Acikgenc, Western philosophy, Eastern philosophy, yoga, civilization.

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A number of the studies in this respect are based on the pre-assumption that “Philosophy-in general terms- is Western Philosophy”. West accuses East for being underdeveloped whereas East criticizes West due to its hegemonic attitude. For instance, Krzysztof Gawlikowski believes that the assessment of the studies in Europe is generalized to all human nature. Moreover, Gawlikowski claims that many Westerners seem to have a strong faith in the necessity of imposing their values as a moral or religious responsibility.¹

However, there happen to be some other works helpful to understand and reconcile both Eastern and Western philosophies. Joel Kupperman’s *Learning from Asian Philosophy*² provides a good example for this kind of works. Kupperman underscores that Western thinkers can well utilize Asian philosophy to learn new elements of knowledge-especially in the field of ‘ethics’. Still it seems to be crucial to consider the fact that even the aforementioned studies-including Kupperman’s- base their arguments on the Western understanding. Beyond the problems of language and translation, the key problem of the comparative studies tackling the Eastern philosophy appears to be the huge difference in ‘worldview’. Living in the same world, to grasp the realities of that world, and to deal with the problems are the essences of all thoughts. To view the reflections of the same world on different cultures would enhance our world of thoughts as well. In his article on the aims and methods of comparative philosophy, Jesse Fleming emphasizes various kinds of comparison, and elucidates the significance of comparative studies to broaden the meaning and area of philosophy.³

Russell interprets Western philosophy as a sequel of pagan religion and culture. He asserts that philosophy encountered religion again by the fall of Rome⁴. In general, Russell regards Western philosophy as a continuation of Ancient Greek philosophy. However, Alparslan Açıkgenç, who believes science and philosophy are among the key elements of civilization, distinguishes Western philosophy from Greek philosophy. The difference stems from the gap between the worldviews constructing both philosophies. From this viewpoint, it seems quite possible to interpret Western philosophy as a product of people nourished by Christian worldview, whether they be devoted Christians or atheists. Although Russell argues western philosophy is a continuation of Ancient Greek philosophy, he also points to the long-term

influence of Christianity on Western philosophy after Stoicism⁵. Most important of all is the integrated image of Western philosophy today despite the contrasting views inside.

Regardless to many other philosophers who argue for the difficulty of integrating the views constituting Eastern philosophy, Shelton A. Gunaratne claims Asian belief systems such as Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism, and Hinduism form the essence of it. East’s relatively large geographical area and history dating back to pre-historic times stand as noteworthy issues concerning the borders of the Eastern thought.⁶ Turkey provides a good example to the countries with her proximity both to Europe and to Asia, which brings forth the issue of influence. In many eastern countries, some characteristics of Western philosophy happen to exist alongside the Eastern tradition of philosophy further complicating the issue of borders. Brain Carr and Indira Mahalingam seek to overcome this problem by emphasizing the impossibility of drawing a geographical border between the East and the West in terms of philosophy.⁷ Fred Dallmayr denounces Rudyard Kipling’s noted understanding- East is east; and west is west and these two can never integrate- for being antiquated, and suggests fast transport and instant communication have destroyed the boundaries between the cultures.⁸

Indian, Chinese, Japanese, and Korean philosophies happen to be the components of Eastern philosophy in general terms. Besides, Central Asian, Iranian, Arabic and Islamic philosophies count as authentic with their content although they are the products of a history intermingled with the West. In this respect, Gunaratne argues that Islam cannot be regarded as Eastern for being among Abraham’s religions.⁹ On the other hand, despite the remarkable Aristotelian influence on Medieval Islamic philosophers, some orientalist such as Oliver Leaman preferred to categorize Islamic philosophy as Eastern.¹⁰ As Leaman underlines, Eastern philosophy is thought to be more totalitarian and involves a quest for enlightenment. Western philosophy, on the other hand, deals with notions such as ‘truth’, ‘logic’, and ‘reason’.¹¹

The most outstanding characteristic of Eastern philosophy is that it lacks the claim to be secular, or such an attitude has no significance to determine the general philosophical

5 Ibid, xv.

6 Shelton A. Gunaratne. “Globalization of Social Sciences”, *Communication, Culture & Critique*, 2 (2009), 81.

7 Brain Carr and Indira Mahalingam. *Companion Encyclopedia of Asian Philosophy* (London, New York: Routledge, 1997), xxvii.

8 Fred Dallmayr. “Western Thought and Indian Thought: Comments on Ramanujan”, *Philosophy East and West*, 44 (1994). 527.

9 Shelton A. Gunaratne. “Globalization: A Non-Western Perspective: The Bias of Social Science/Communication Oligopoly”, *Communication, Culture & Critique*, 2 (2009), 81.

10 Oliver Leaman. *Key Concepts in Eastern Philosophy* (London, New York: Routledge, 1999), vii.

11 Oliver Leaman. *Eastern Philosophy Key Readings* (London: Routledge, 2000), ix.

1 Krzysztof Gawlikowski, “The Civilization of Struggle in the West and Appreciation of Harmony in East Asia: Philosophical and Social Implications of the two Approaches”, *World Conference: Dialogue among Civilizations: The Key to a Safe Future* (Warsaw: EBSCO Publishing, 2003), 20.

2 Joel Kupperman. *Learning from Asian Philosophy* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 3.

3 Jesse Fleming. “Comparative Philosophy: Its Aims and Methods”, *Journal of Chinese Philosophy*, 30: 2 (2003), 259–270, 261.

4 Bertrand Russell. *A History of Western* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1945), xiv.

approach. Eastern philosophy consists of thought currents stressing moral and religious doctrines. Only after Western philosophy and philosopher commenced comparative studies due to keen interest in the East, the projections of ubiquitous problems of Western philosophy are revealed in Eastern philosophy. Although some scholars argue that East-West distinction stems from geographical differences alone, some others disagree with that approach. According to Leaman, this distinction happens to be completely artificial, and exposes the philosophical attitudes instead of geographical differences. Ibn Rushd happens to be a superb example of an Eastern philosopher living in the West.¹² The members of Kyoto School have studied on the subject, and produced many comparative works on the synthesis of the East and the West. The founder of Kyoto School, Nishida Kitaro lists whole Western philosophy under the notion of 'being' whereas he employs the term 'nothingness' for the texts of Eastern philosophy. He names the logic produced by 'nothingness' as 'concrete logic' and characterizes Western logic as 'abstract'. In this respect, East is east, and West is west, and these two can never be combined". Kitaro also asserts that West objectifies the individual, but in Eastern philosophy, the individual is totally subjective.¹³

Geographical position, climate, economic system, political structure, education and diet all exert an enormous effect on people and society. Therefore, it seems quite natural to observe diversity that originates from different social lives and practices beside similarities of being human. It is crucial to gain an original synthesis out of diversity, and confer it to the comprehension of all humanity. Comparative studies concerning the East and the West assume considerable importance because of this purpose.

A contemporary philosopher, Alparslan Açıkgenç studies East-West synthesis from a Turkish-Islamic viewpoint. Açıkgenç has compared Mullah Sadra and Heidegger, the philosophers of two different worlds, in terms of being in his PhD study. Although these two philosophers happen to be of different cultures, times, and worlds, they both dealt with 'philosophy of Being'¹⁴ which enables to categorize them as 'philosophers of Being'¹⁵. Later on, in his book *Islamization of Knowledge*, Açıkgenç analyzes the epistemology of Islamic philosophy by the means of philosophical criterion. Therefore, his book implements guidelines

for the East to convey itself through Western philosophical notions; furthermore, he provides a conceptual platform for the West to fathom the East.

Açıkgenç believes 'worldview' has formed the inception of civilizations, and on the basis of his theory, he suggests that three main civilizations on three different worldviews have prevailed throughout the history of thought, namely Greek, Islamic, and Western.¹⁶ He excludes Chinese, Indian, Persian and Turkish civilizations on the grounds of his own definition of 'civilization'. The indispensable elements of civilization happen to be universality, multiculturalism, and a scientific or an artistic language.¹⁷ Among these elements, scientific activity and sciences occupy a pivotal position. To access a generally accepted definition of science, he handles it as an organized accumulation of knowledge.¹⁸ In this respect, the first characteristic of 'the accumulation of knowledge' on certain problems appear to be 'subject'. He demonstrates science, which examines each 'subject' in a specific way, cannot exist without a method. A person who studies a certain subject by a certain method establishes some assumptions and some of these assumptions, namely theories construe a scientific accumulation of knowledge after being confirmed. Four fundamentals of Açıkgenç definition of 'science' appear to be 'subject', 'method', 'theory', and 'accumulation of knowledge'. He ignores the relative merit or acceptability of an 'accumulation of knowledge' in different societies. What seems important to him is that any scientific activity, acceptable in the society it emerged, should at least possess aforementioned four characteristics. Formation of science includes the processes for the accumulative knowledge to gain these characteristics and for these characteristics, to be named. Therefore, 'naming' occurs to be among the requisites of scientific process. 'Naming' indicates a 'scientific consciousness' that has originated for that accumulation of knowledge. As Açıkgenç asserts, "Science is an organized accumulation of knowledge of a group of theories about a certain subject, handled by a certain method, and named due to scientific consciousness". In some eastern societies such as China, India, and Egypt, accumulations of knowledge exist though not named owing to lack of scientific consciousness. These societies might give the impression that they have forged civilizations by means of their ancient cultures and practical scientific knowledge used in daily life; however,

12 Ibid.

13 Nishida Kitarō. *Last Writings: Nothingness and the Religious Worldview*, trans. David A. Dilworth (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1987), 140.

14 Alparslan Açıkgenç. *Being and Existence in Sadra and Heidegger: A Comparative Ontology* (Kuala Lumpur: ISTAC, 1993), 7.

15 Ibid.

16 Alparslan Açıkgenç. *Scientific Thought and Its Burdens* (Istanbul: Fatih University Press, 2000), 27, 35. Also Alparslan Açıkgenç, "The New World Civilization in Unity Prospects and Plan of Action for Uniwoc", *The Path to Alliance of Civilizations through the Asian Community* (Jakarta, İstanbul, Seoul: Fatih University Press, 2009), 11.

17 Alparslan Açıkgenç. *İslam Medeniyetinde Bilgi ve Bilim* (Istanbul: ISAM Yayınları, 2008), 20.

18 Ibid.

current data remains inadequate to include them in Açıkgenç scientific societies generating civilization. Açıkgenç argues that;

We cannot regard all calculations performed in ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia as “Mathematics” in the scientific sense; similarly, we cannot evaluate all information concerning the sky as “astronomy”. In an optimist approach, the accumulation gained through history could be described as certain calculations and attempts to discover the sky.¹⁹

He thus underscores three civilizations fulfilling the criteria set by his definition of civilization-on the grounds of accessible data-; yet he stresses, in his seminars, he would approve the additions to the list if his criteria preserved.

Açıkgenç scrutinizes, “civilizations rise upon some abstract notions.”²⁰ For this reason, to comprehend notions and to find the corresponding terms in other understandings seem to be profoundly important. Açıkgenç argues that the notion ‘philosophy’ belongs to Ancient Greek and refers to abstract thinking and contemplation; therefore, the corresponding words in Eastern cultures should be determined and examined with all their connotations and analyzed in terms of accuracy to ‘philosophy’.²¹ According to Açıkgenç, “The abstract notions compose the distinguishable features of civilizations”, and “science and philosophy systematize these abstract notions in a meaningful way turning them into knowledge”. He claims science and philosophy to be two human facts constituting civilizations. Açıkgenç has carried out an extensive conceptual research in Islamic philosophy, and figured out the term ‘Kalam’ referring to abstract thinking in Islamic philosophy.²² He also approves the studies of Eastern thinkers-Chinese, Korean, and Indian- as philosophy and criticizes those who refuse to accept this accumulation as philosophical work. As a staunch believer in science and philosophy’s key role to generate civilizations, he embraces the existence of Eastern philosophy, which has failed to originate a civilization. In this case, not philosophy but scientific activity appears to be missing to form an Eastern civilization.

In fact, Açıkgenç believes an authentic philosophical language can only be established through an authentic scientific language.²³ In this respect, a language that has managed to produce philosophy is supposed to have produced science as well. Açıkgenç has based his definition of science upon the concept of ‘worldview’, and developed an original perspective.

He assumes, “‘Worldview’ is the mental basis for all human activity both epistemological and scientific.”²⁴ Then “we act, think, and believe according to our worldview”.²⁵ The elements that construct our worldviews are ‘psychological, social and educational.’²⁶ Worldview emerges in the mind in three different ways: 1-generated by the society, 2-acquired through intentional attempts to access knowledge, 3- both of them.²⁷ He calls the first ‘natural worldview’ whereas he names the second and the third ‘transparent worldview’. He claims that there would not be a scientific tradition without a ‘transparent worldview’. In his view, the person with a transparent worldview has an aim and a goal in life; in addition, this enlightened person can answer the significant questions concerning life. Açıkgenç also examines emergence of transparent worldview in two ways: first by the intellectuals and second through organized scientific knowledge.

Açıkgenç argument that only three civilizations-on the fundamentals of scientific tradition- exist, is based on various cultures’ acceptance of one transparent worldview. This view would help us comprehend why east originated systems of thought are still questioned whether they are philosophy or not, and why Eastern science failed to construct a civilization as well. To understand the essentials of Açıkgenç ‘worldview’ theory, it seems vital to examine the stages of scientific process in a scientific tradition: 1- worldview, 2- problems, 3- method, 4- naming, 5- development, 6- discontinuation, 7- collapse. He employs this process to analyze the development of Greek, Islamic, and Western civilizations in a backwards study, but excludes Indian, Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Mesopotamian, and Persian cultures.²⁸ When he states, “the calculations performed in ancient Mesopotamia and Egypt cannot be regarded as ‘mathematics’ in the scientific sense or the observations of the sky cannot be ‘astronomy’, he evaluates these activities as technological developments but not science. Acikgenc compares the technological inventions of the ancient times with today, and underlines the fact that it is not the ancient societies but us who label these inventions as scientific; thus, they failed to complete the phases of scientific process. The pivotal point of his argument for the societies seems to be the necessity of social awareness and consciousness to name the inventions and accumulation of knowledge. In this respect, he ignores the parallel contents of Eastern and Western works, or the existence of some information and inventions accomplished only in 800

19 Ibid, 57.

20 Alparslan Açıkgenç. *Bilgi Felsefesi* (Istanbul: İnsan yayınları, 2002), 11.

21 Ibid.

22 Alparslan Açıkgenç. *Islamic Science: Towards a Definition* (Kuala Lumpur: ISTAC, 1996), 17.

23 Açıkgenç, “The New World”, op. cit.

24 Açıkgenç, *İslam Medeniyetinde*, op. cit., 28.

25 Ibid, 29.

26 Açıkgenç, *Bilginin İslamileştirilmesi*, op. cit., 24.

27 Açıkgenç, *İslam Medeniyetinde*, op. cit., 29.

28 See his *Scientific Thought and its Burdens* (Istanbul: Fatih University Press, 2000), especially chapters 3-4.

B.C. in the West but dating back to 1500 B.C. in the East because “Eastern societies have never named them at the end of a process.”²⁹

Acikgenc’s system of knowledge and science efficiently explains his putative civilizations. From this perspective, many eastern countries such as India, Japan, Central Asia, and Egypt are excluded in terms of science and technology. However, future studies might enhance this viewpoint. To elaborate the problem further, I will offer an example, namely ‘yoga’, which has played an active role to shape the lifestyles of Chinese and Indian societies.

Yoga, the therapeutic practice of modern times, appears as a philosophical system in the Encyclopedia of Britannica by Kautilya, the famous philosopher and politician of the time. Charles Rockwell Lanman handled the issue in detail in 1918, and explicated the reasons why yoga should be regarded as an ancient philosophical system our perspective today and from the perspective of ancient Indian thinkers. He demonstrates in his article how yoga has been categorized as a school of philosophy under the name ‘yoga-system’ in ancient India.³⁰ This usage proves that Indian society has completed the process of ‘transparency’ by the final phase of naming their worldview, which means they have a ‘transparent worldview’ about human, society and life beside awareness to name it. Mostly, other cultures have accepted and embraced this system. Yoga-system presents a life-system to Hindus, a similar role performed by fikh in Islam. K.S. Joshi asserts, “It is frequently associated with the acquisition and exhibition of supernatural powers. It is customary to look at yoga as a curious ancient art, which combines a set of religious beliefs with a strange and mysterious practical discipline.”³¹ Joshi points to the superstitious ideas prevalent about yoga even in the homeland. Regardless to misunderstandings and misinterpretations, yoga introduces a system in which souls itinerate from one body to another, forms a transparent worldview on the basis of purifying the soul at the end of the process, and turns into a system with its common, effective and universal characteristics.

I will express the philosophical diversity consistently emphasized by Kitaro within the framework of Acikgenc’s notion of worldview; the different worldviews of the East and the West have been reflected to their scientific traditions. Islam, which is neither completely Eastern nor completely Western, rises on four basic principles: tawhid, prophecy, resurrection, and justice. The person improves himself through the creeds of tawhid and prophecy, and prepares

himself for afterlife, which is a sequel of faith in resurrection. At the same time, he should fight continuously for justice against the tricks of the world. Christianity, one of the fundamentals of Western civilization, has been interpreted in various ways so far. Despite the belief that people are born with the original sin, most Christians believe “salvation is a gift from God to believers as a return for their faith.”³² Catholicism requires baptism and confession on the path to salvation; however, Protestantism regards salvation as the manifestation of God’s mercy depending upon his own will and preference. Until the emergence of Protestantism, church served as a central motive to organize the relationship between the individual and God. Protestantism re-interpreted this view by minimizing the power of church. Later Calvinists also adopted the view that only those chosen and forgiven by God can ascend to heaven.³³ Though not for sure, the sign of being chosen appears in the form of accomplishment. The difference between the worldviews enables to understand Kitaro’s emphasis on subjectivity in Eastern thought corresponding objectivity in the West. As Kupperman puts, in the East the major ethical problem is how an individual should compose a personality to lead a better life; on the other hand, the West never attaches primary importance to the same subject. At this point, examining the differences in worldviews of the East and the West will definitely help to explicate the gap between them.

Although these scientific fields barely resemble western scientific fields, Acikgenc argues Islam has generated an Islamic civilization by spreading ‘the transparent worldview’ to different cultures. He carries out an in-depth analysis of Islamic worldview whereas he only elaborates on the processes of western civilization. Moreover, he excluded Indian, Chinese, Korean, and Central Asian societies. Hence, although cultures generating civilizations seem to be confined to three, further studies on the grounds of ‘worldview’ theory would broaden our perception of civilization. In fact, such studies would contribute to comparative studies on the basis of similarities in lifestyle and worldview steps. However, it would be more appropriate for Acikgenc to free his perception of civilization from ‘power’, and totally base it on his theory of ‘worldview’.

In terms of the gap between the East and the West, East has always been questioned most probably due to the West’s hegemony that stems from advanced civilization and technology. In the light of the definitions Eric Wolf sets forth about ‘cultural’ and ‘sociological’³⁴ perceptions

32 Efesliler 2: 8- 10, Romalılar 3: 23- 25.

33 Max Weber. *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. Talcott Parsons (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1950), 100.

34 Eric Wolf. “Understanding Civilizations: A Review Article”, *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 9

29 Açıkgenç, *İslam Medeniyetinde*, op. cit., 57.

30 Charles Rockwell Lanman. “Yoga-System”, *The Harvard Theological Review*, 11 (1918), 359.

31 K. S. Joshi, “On the Meaning of Yoga,” *Philosophy East and West*, vol: 15, 1965, 53.

of civilization, Acikgenc stands definitely closer to a sociology-oriented notion of civilization rather than a culture-oriented one. In other words, Eastern civilization possesses a cultural texture whereas Western civilization involves a social content. A backward assessment examining the progress of society in regard to Acikgenc might draw us to the following comment: Eastern worldview regards the human as an essential part of nature, but Western worldview perceives the world as a gift from God to himself.³⁵ Probably for this reason, science and technology advanced in the West in order to open up new opportunities to rule over nature and paved the way to form a hegemonic culture; in the East, however, branches of science-such as yoga- focusing on human-society relations and aiming 'salvation' and 'peace' for people made progress. The information to control the nature remained inactive inventions to be used in case of necessity. Arun Bala argues Fukuyama and Huntington's interpretations of civilization based on modern science of the West trigger theses about 'apocalypse' and or 'war of civilizations'. Bala asserts current science should permit a new tradition of knowledge to restart history.³⁶ The West confronted a traumatic experience when scientific and technological developments led to serious environmental problems. This experience has triggered some attempts in the West to renew the understanding of science by some approaches that have already existed in the East-some currents such as Eco-Buddhism has emerged in this respect-, which can well mean a promising start for a new tradition. Acikgenc seeks to form a new tradition of knowledge as well. However, his system omits Eastern civilizations except for Islam. Mesopotamians used the mathematical inventions Acikgenc mentions functionally without naming them because these inventions barely deserved to be science in the Eastern worldview. Hindus named and introduced the Yoga-system inspired by the significant notion of 'salvation' in their worldview to the whole world including the West. In fact, yoga, as a system has composed an accumulation of knowledge because it emerged on the basic principal to direct people to purify their souls. Yoga has taught people to know themselves better by purifying their souls, yet failed to grant the privilege to control nature unlike modern science. Due to the concept of 'power', the culture generated by Hindu thinking systems is excluded in Acikgenc's 'civilization', which comes into being by universalization (*kullilesme*) of cultures.³⁷ At his point, if we apply Acikgenc's 'worldview' theory without any emphasis on power, it would be easier to accept Hindu culture as a civilization, having reached the transparent

(1967), 447.

35 Brian Wilson. *Christianity* (London: Routledge, 1999), 34.

36 Arun Bala. *Dialogue of Civilizations in the Birth of Modern Science* (Gordonsville: Macmillan, 2006), 4.

37 Açıkgenç, *İslam Medeniyetinde*, op. cit., 149.

worldview.

According to Acikgenc's theory, owing to different perceptions of universe, the East has experienced the transparency process in the light of the knowledge gained through knowledgeable intellectuals, but the East has preferred scientific knowledge during the process. The transparency process reveals the most evident east-west synthesis in Islamic civilization. According to Acikgenc, the worldview phase of the scientific process in Islamic Civilization has operated on the minds through the image of the universe formed by the Quran. In other words, knowledge has commenced by prophecy and continued by science. Rising urban population and modernization has damaged Eastern scientific tradition which is transferred through a master-apprentice relationship, thus East has sought new ways. Although many Eastern countries have preferred to imitate the West by adapting it, the difficulties have proven the necessity of a quest for an original method. The problems have occurred especially in the area of education. Today, The East stands in a position where it adapts western science to its culture. Therefore, even if it fails to find a place in Acikgenc's 'civilization', the possibility that it might have formed a civilization should not be ignored. The East has stayed in the living world with its thinkers and wisdom, and has sought to find answers to the fundamental questions of life. Analects that contain some advice for the princes are intermingled with life. Hadith and Sunna of Prophet Muhammed consisting of his acts and sayings-one of the two fundamental resources of Islamic tradition of philosophy- also reflect the world perspective of the East. This methodical appropriateness leads many thinkers to classify Islamic civilization as Eastern despite the similarities both civilizations share. Eastern philosophy emphasizes the primary role of the intellectuals as a common principal, and regardless to thematic differences, handles the issues like 'peace', 'salvation', and 'purification' related with the inner-struggle of the human.

The East is used to a model of intellectual teaching while living. Thus, even the East questions its own philosophical style in terms of similarities and differences when it comes across western style philosophy. This approach never implies a huge gap between western philosophy and life, yet stresses how western philosophy becomes disjointed from life when handled by a culture with dramatically different experiences. Western philosophy has flourished in the Western world; the ideas and methods have originated accordingly. After the process of cultural progress, it has employed scientific knowledge to reach a 'transparent worldview'. In this respect, both Greek and Western civilizations bear resemblance. Islamic civilization, on the other hand, has started the process of transparency by knowledgeable

intellectuals, but after a while blended its accumulation with organized scientific knowledge as a result of increasing scientific activity and interactions with the West, which means Islamic civilization has employed both methods. As a belief system nourished by prophecy, Islam has granted methodical priority to intellectuals. Through its rational structure pointed by Chirot, it has transformed the knowledge of the intellectuals into an accumulation of data, and continued the transparency process organizing by scientific knowledge.³⁸ In this regard, although most thinkers regarded Islamic belief system as Western, the debate has never ended.

In the general sense, the East has handled knowledge as that of living world, and followed different methods from the West to transfer the lifestyles to the area of thinking. Like the thinkers in the West, Eastern thinkers have grown up in a certain period, in a certain geography under the influence of a certain culture and conveyed universal messages. Today, a great deal of ideas put forward by Eastern thinkers still maintains their validity. However, because of the accumulative knowledge they have produced rise upon the themes 'purification', 'salvation' and 'peace', so that it failed to correspond to west-oriented definitions of science. Nevertheless, as a result of worldviews depending on the idea of 'eternity', living world has been arranged by the focus on individual and society, and technology has remained a means due to the purpose to live in harmony with nature. Acikgenc assigns an enormous role to scientific knowledge in the analysis of the dynamic structure of society. As he gives priority to scientific knowledge behind power-producing technologies, he refuses to accept the cultures that lack power as 'civilizations'.³⁹ Acikgenc emphasizes Greek Science, Western science and Islamic science universalized by lots of cultures and they gave birth to civilizations by their transparent worldviews gathered from their rational sciences. However this kind of "universalization of a culture" implies power as the basic complement of civilization. The problematic aspect here seems to be the West's hegemonic attitude to insist on its own reason based "scientific" values as essentials when forming a philosophical tradition.

Although the phenomenological perception of living world happens to be a method, it is accepted as lacking sufficiency to generate a tradition. Thus what we have to do is a re-assessment. The universal messages put forward by all cultures in the historical process should be re-assessed on the grounds of their own science and philosophy.

Significant innovations occurred in the field of thought as a result of postmodern approaches. Anti-essentialist and anti-foundationalist discourses destroy the legacy of western

hegemony establishing suitable grounds for new approaches. New approaches and syntheses have begun to replace reason-logic oriented Western understanding. Whereas Eastern philosophy was once labeled as 'literature of wisdom', today many philosophers inspired by the East such as Arthur Schopenhaur, Friedrich Nietzsche, Rene Guenon, Martin Heidegger, Fritjof Capra, and Joel J. Kupperman disapprove this definition.

Acikgenc, coming from Turkish-Islamic tradition, has developed original discourses. On the basis of Acikgenc's description of the process of scientific society, it seems crucial to explicate how the East transfers its living world to the process of transparency. At this point two alternatives pop up: first, to pay attention to what intellectuals express, second to arrange social needs by scientific knowledge. As above analysis has proved Western and Eastern methodical traces in Islamic Civilization distinguishes it remarkably from Eastern and Western civilizations, adding it to the category of cultures generating civilizations.⁴⁰

Emergence of a scientific society, its giving birth to a civilization can only be achieved through the discovery of the living world and production of authentic works in all fields including history, literature, and art. The East has produced authentic works in these fields. However, these works have never been defined from the perspective of tradition, yet they have been used as practical applications within the constraints of the living world from the teacher to the student. An integrating method specifically defined for Eastern philosophy would contribute to convey the fertile thinking world and western style philosophical and scientific structure that have always existed in the East. The prominent role of scientific knowledge in accordance with their worldview in transparency process should be demonstrated. The different focus point of western and eastern sciences cannot be a proof of lack of foundational necessities of civilization. It shows us the difference in procession dynamics of civilization depending on different worldviews as Açıkgenc assumes.

38 Daniel Chirot. "The Rise of the West", *American Sociological Review*, 50 (1985), 189.

39 *Islamic Science*, op. cit., 3.

40 *İslam Medeniyetinde*, op. cit., 60-67.