

Abstract

The research question: How does the concept of “comparison,” inspired by the enlightened concept of critique, act as an intercultural mechanism serving the Enlightenment’s ideal of universality?

The research hypothesis: As a transition period, the Enlightenment aims to build a new world, or more precisely, its goal is to rebuild the modern world based on human reason. The Enlightenment considers humanity to be a universal concept and tends to go beyond European borders to define global patterns of humanity. In this study, the *Persian Letters* is examined as a philosophical work, which represents the universalist tendencies of the Enlightenment era through a comparative study of the philosophical movement’s encounter with foreigners. The study aims to say that the concept of comparison plays a major role in replacing well-established ideas of the era in order to establish new ones. This process of change is initiated through comparisons made between European societies and exotic foreign cultures.

The research aim: The purpose of this work is to examine *Persian Letters* as a sample of efforts made by the Enlightenment thinkers to achieve the Enlightenment ideal: that is, making a “change”, or in other words causing *revolution*, *enlightenment* or even *modernization* in non-European societies, based on the new universalist concept of humanity. In the *Persian Letters*, this is attempted through the mechanism of comparison -between European and non-European societies- as a form of critique.

Keywords: Enlightenment, *Persian Letters*, Montesquieu, Comparison, Critique, Authority, Autonomy, Universality.