

**“Slavery of the Mind and “Mental Imprisonment” (1870) in the harem:  
the Bodiless Society, a de-gendered or gender-neutral emancipatory social space?**

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**ABSTRACT**

Many current issues concerning democratic operations and processes in social-state institutions and policies remind us of old and decayed institutions. In Ottoman society, for instance, the fundamental elements of the slavery institution, as well as those of the polyethnic (multiethnic) harem-slavery institution and harem culture were: exclusion, exploitation, **despotism**, racism, oppression, alienation, corruption, persecution, conspiracy networks, despotism, terrorism, specific ‘sexual politics’, physical and mental castration, the violation of the personality and the body, restricted mobility, etc. Similar characteristics observed in today’s Information Society, on a ‘virtual’ level, in the ‘Virtual Harem’, include: the exclusion of specific social groups from technological developments, electronic conspiracy networks, electronic terrorism, the violation of the electronic personality, domination of the imaginary (fantasy), explosion of pornography, the slave-trafficking of women and children, castrated human subjects, electronic terrorism and surveillance, among other things. All these characteristics are the result of the process of exclusion of many social groups from technological access, education, developments and know-how based on gender, race, socio-economic class, etc. Social systems or entire societies that were based on exclusion or non-democratic patterns, attitudes and policies towards its members, towards specific social groups eventually collapsed, as was the case of the Ottoman social system which was sustained and supported by the institution of slavery and gender dichotomy/segregation.

Despite its bottom-up (egalitarian) development, the Information Society seems to run the risk of bringing forth a new elite, a new pyramidal hierarchy of power. This elite’s key objectives are to gain control over technological research, design, development and its applications. There is a real threat that ‘**digital despotism**’ may in the end succeed in drawing the boundaries of exclusion for many social groups and women in particular, according to results from international and intercultural gender research. Undoubtedly, technological culture excludes the perspectives of women and non-mainstream groups.

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