

The History of Civilization in Europe



François-Pierre-Guillaume Guizot

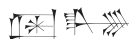
THE
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CIVILIZATION
IN EUROPE

François Guizot



TRANSLATED BY WILLIAM HAZLITT

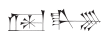
EDITED AND WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY
LARRY SIEDENTOP



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Frontispiece: Portrait of François-Pierre-Guillaume Guizot after a painting by
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Introduction

Sometimes it is better *not* to be moderate when making a claim. François Guizot's *History of Civilization in Europe* (1828) is one such occasion. For it is, in my opinion, the most intelligent general history of Europe ever written. It is not, to be sure, a narrative history. It is rather an analytical or sociological history—belonging to a genre with roots in the eighteenth century, what Guizot himself calls “philosophical history.” By that he means history understood as the search for the underlying causes and effects of particular events, the identification of “general facts” and the moral reflections they suggest. In that genre Guizot has had no peer.

The claim just made would not have caused much surprise in intellectual circles in Paris or London in the 1830s. For Guizot's reputation as an utterly remarkable historian was then well established. Not only had his 1828 lectures, on the History of Civilization in Europe, caused something of a sensation in Paris, becoming a rallying point for liberal youth and intelligentsia after the downfall of the ultra-royalist government of Villèle in 1827. That liberal enthusiasm also guaranteed Guizot a large, attentive audience for two more years of lectures on the History of Civilization in France, a lecturing career brought to a close only by the July Revolution of 1830. By that time Guizot's lectures, quickly published as books, were causing comment and excitement outside France as well. In London especially, John Stuart Mill was to write appreciative reviews of Guizot's work, using them to argue that historical writing had entered a new era—an era which had not yet dawned in the English-speaking world. For Mill, Guizot's analysis of the development of European institutions opened up new vistas for social and political thought. Nor was he alone in thinking so. For the two greatest social and political thinkers of the nineteenth century, Alexis de

Tocqueville and Karl Marx, were also decisively influenced by Guizot at this period. It is hardly too much to say that Guizot's *Histories* thus helped to shape the major contours of nineteenth-century European thought.

Yet by the end of the nineteenth century, despite his earlier reputation and influence, Guizot's historical work had almost dropped out of sight. What had happened? Why had his fame as an historian been eclipsed by writers such as Michelet and Macaulay—writers who, however eloquent and imaginative, could not really match Guizot's analytical acumen? Why did Guizot's ideas survive only indirectly, in arguments put forward by J. S. Mill, Tocqueville and Marx?

One thing more than any other contributed to the eclipse of Guizot's reputation as an historical thinker. That was his subsequent career as a politician. The July Revolution of 1830—which, as we have seen, ended his lecturing career—led to Guizot becoming a deputy and minister in the new regime, soon to be dubbed the July Monarchy. During the 1830s Guizot's work on the reform of public education rapidly brought him into prominence. By 1840 his formidable ability led to his becoming the Dominant minister and remaining so until the 1848 Revolution put an end to the regime. Guizot's association with the manipulative "bourgeois" monarchy—parodied in his famous reply to critics of the regime who called for a lower property qualification for voting, that they should "get richer"—led to his being crucified with the regime itself. By 1848 the policy pursued by King Louis-Philippe and Guizot was perceived as serving narrowly middle-class interests at the expense of other social classes, whether the peasantry, the new industrial working class or the old *noblesse*. Guizot's period in power came to epitomize a self-interested bourgeois settlement, in which French national interests were reduced to those of bankers, merchants and shopkeepers—what the aristocratic Tocqueville dismissed contemptuously as a bourgeois casserole.

The Revolutionary insurrection in Paris in February 1848 forced Guizot to take refuge in England. When he returned to France the following year, both political circumstances and personal choice led him to withdraw from the public scene. He spent increasingly long parts of the year at his Norman château, Val Richer, where he resumed a life of study and writing. Like many former parliamentarians, he considered Louis Napoleon's

coup d'état (1851) and the proclamation of the Second Empire (1852) disasters for France—comparing his compatriots to dissolute sons who neglect their inheritance and leave its management to others. Guizot continued to write occasionally about public issues, with pamphlets on *Democracy in Europe* and *Meditations on the Christian Religion*. But his chief work became once again historical, with studies of the English Revolution, a *History of France as told to my grandchildren*, as well as his own *Memoirs*. In fact Guizot survived long enough to see the fall of the Second Empire in 1870 and the establishment of the Third Republic. By this time he was a venerable figure, and his only public role was that of *de facto* leader of French Protestantism. He died in 1874, eighty-six years old.

It is, however, the younger Guizot, the Guizot of the 1820s, who must occupy us, a Guizot as yet untainted by the July Monarchy and the 1848 Revolution. So it is important to put to one side the much caricatured politician of the 1840s and try to recapture the intellectual who had perhaps the most trenchant historical mind of the nineteenth century.

One day in 1806 a pale young man with deep-set eyes and an extraordinarily fine, prominent forehead arrived in Paris by coach from Geneva. He was called François Pierre Guillaume Guizot. He had come to Paris to complete his education and make his way in the world. He had almost no money, but nonetheless he already had marked advantages—a disciplined will, strong religious beliefs and an education beyond the common run. For an attentive observer, the nature of his education and the austerity of his manner might have suggested something about his origins. For Guizot, though born in Nîmes, had spent some of his youth in Geneva and was a Protestant. The reason for his being educated in Geneva rather than Nîmes and the fact that he was Protestant shaped his later career and help to account for what was to be a widespread reaction to Guizot in France—that there was something about him not quite French, and that perhaps he did not always understand the French.

François Guizot had been born in 1787 to a Protestant family, in a country which did not yet confer full civil rights on Protestants and had only just allowed them to marry legally. Doubtless, that background would have created some detachment in any case. But when he was only seven, Guizot

lived through events which put him on his guard and removed any naïvety about social relations. Spreading from Paris, the Reign of Terror had, as one of its consequences in Nîmes, the arrest of Guizot's father, a leading advocate, who was condemned to die on the scaffold in 1794. It is hardly surprising that Guizot's mother, a staunch Calvinist, later took her two small children away from Nîmes to the city of Geneva, where she sought shelter with relations and fellow Protestants. That experience of civil war and its consequences—Guizot would never forget the day that Robespierre fell—doubtless contributed to the analytical frame of mind for which Guizot the historian later became famous.

Civil war and the death of his father created in the young man a passionate need to understand events, their causes and effects. The Academy of Geneva, where he was soon enrolled, gave him an unusual opportunity to satisfy that desire. "Geneva was my intellectual cradle." Swiss education had not suffered to anything like the extent of French education from the disorders of Revolution. Besides, the Protestant culture of Geneva had always favoured education, witnessed by the way the young Guizot learned not only Greek and Latin, but several modern European languages, especially those of the important Protestant states, German and English. Guizot's classical studies at Geneva also enabled him eventually to combine two disciplines, history and philosophy, which have since been separated almost completely by the division of intellectual labour. It is tempting to see his passion for philosophy, though contained within the essentially historical cast of his mind, as an important source of the distinctive form of historical argument he developed—a form which involved laying down premises and arguing from them in order to get behind the surface of events to their causes. History, for Guizot, always involved comparison and argument, which in turn required making assumptions and testing them against the narrative of events.

But that historical sophistication lay in the future when Guizot arrived in Paris in order to study law. He found that the older law schools had disappeared with the Revolution and, perhaps because of the cost involved, he did not enrol in one of the new private schools. Instead he pursued legal studies on his own. It has been remarked that his first years in Paris saw Guizot isolated and lonely, and indeed it must have been so. But for a

twenty year old, deeply immersed in books and ideas, that had its compensations. The study of law was also to serve him well in later years, helping to give his historical writing a profoundly sociological cast. For Guizot's approach to analysing European or French society at any period was to relate the conditions of persons to the condition of properties—in his view, property relations and class structure provided indispensable keys to understanding social change.

Hardly a year after his arrival in Paris, Guizot took up a post of tutor to the children of the Swiss Envoy in Paris, M. Stapfer—no doubt arranged through his Genevan contacts. This post proved surprisingly important for Guizot's career. Through Stapfer he was introduced to leading literary and intellectual figures in Paris, including Suard, who held a much frequented salon. There Guizot encountered the remnants of a brilliant pre-Revolutionary society, whose openness to new ideas and delight in conversation impressed him and began to give his fervent Calvinism a more worldly flavour. It was through Stapfer and Suard that, in 1810, Guizot met the most original French philosopher of the day, Maine de Biran. Biran was the centre of a philosophical circle which met fortnightly and which Guizot began to attend. There he was exposed to Biran's critique of eighteenth-century empiricist philosophy—an attack which focused on the inadequacy of its conception of the mind as a mere passive receptacle, a bundle of sensations. Biran argued for the essential activity of the mind or will against the passive model of eighteenth-century sensationalism. That insistence on the activity of the self or will and the need for a concept of causation which allowed explanation to account for the "two facts" or types of experience, active and passive, was to shape Guizot's method of writing history.

It was also through Stapfer and Suard that the young Guizot met his future wife. The episode has often been described. But it retains great charm, and throws a sharp light on Guizot's character. Pauline de Meulan came from an aristocratic family (throughout his life Guizot took pleasure in aristocratic company) which had been reduced to near poverty by the Revolution. She supported her relations by writing, and, in particular, editing a journal. However, one day she fell seriously ill, and had to discontinue her writing. Faced with ruin, she received an anonymous letter from someone who enclosed an article written in her own style and

announced that he would supply such articles regularly until she recovered her health. And so it happened, with Pauline de Meulan only discovering the identity of her benefactor after her recovery. She had, in print, repeatedly begged the benefactor to reveal himself. Finally the young Guizot came forward as the author. In fact, they had already met at the Suard salon. In 1812 they married, despite Pauline being fourteen years older than Guizot. Their mutual involvement had taken time, for Guizot's rather austere Calvinism stood in sharp contrast to Pauline's cosmopolitan culture, which had been shaped by eighteenth-century salons. Each changed the other. In a note written many years later, Guizot observed: "Our perfect harmony came only after a long and reciprocal influence. I raised and enlarged the sphere of her concerns; she greatly contributed to my . . . being open to the truth."

Guizot had begun to make his mark as a writer. He drew on his command of German to introduce the French public to the remarkable developments in later eighteenth-century German philosophy and literature. He also translated and provided elaborate notes for an edition of Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*. But the real breakthrough came in 1812 through the patronage of the Academician Fontanes. Guizot was appointed an Assistant Professor of History in the University, and, remarkably soon afterwards, received the Chair of Modern History at the Sorbonne. Only twenty-five years old, his historical erudition was still largely to come. But his character emerged immediately. He refused to include the conventional encomium to the Emperor Napoleon in his Inaugural Lecture.

This new appointment brought Guizot into contact with another professor, who was to have a great influence on his future by introducing him to the world of politics. Pierre Royer-Collard, Professor of Philosophy at the Sorbonne, had long been discreetly active on behalf of the exiled Bourbons. After Napoleon's fall in 1814 and the Restoration of the Bourbon Monarchy, Royer-Collard's patronage led to Guizot's appointment as Secretary General of the Ministry of the Interior. Napoleon's return during the Hundred Days obliged Guizot to return to his University post, but only momentarily. For he soon became the envoy of royalists who wished Louis XVIII, on his return from Ghent after Waterloo, to strengthen his commitment to the Constitutional Charter issued in 1814 and resist the

pressure from ultra-royalists bent on restoring the *ancien régime*. Thus, at the Second Restoration in 1815 Guizot found himself at the very centre of a political struggle between the constitutional royalists sustained by Louis XVIII and the ultra-royalists who had a majority in what was called the “Unthinkable Chamber” (*Chambre introuvable*), a majority more royalist than the King himself. The issue that emerged and continued to dominate Restoration politics was that of representative government itself. Was the King obliged to accept a ministry supported by a majority of the Chamber or were ministers responsible instead to the Crown? Awkwardly, the moderate royalist defenders of representative government had at first to ignore the principle which defined their own position, because of the ultra-royalist majority!

To rescue the moderate party, Louis XVIII dissolved the Unthinkable Chamber in 1815, and new elections resulted in a shift to the centre and the emergence of a series of moderate ministries. Indeed, the next five years saw French government dominated by a group of cautious liberal intellectuals led by Royer-Collard, which included Prosper de Barante and Camille Jordain as well as Guizot. Because of their erudition and interest in ideas, they became known as the *Doctrinaires*—though the term is misleading if taken to mean inflexibility. For the *Doctrinaires* were pragmatic, to say the least, in their attempt to steer a middle course between the forces of reaction and residually Revolutionary or Jacobin groups. During these years, as Secretary-General of the Ministry of Justice and as Director of Communes and Departments in the Ministry of the Interior, Guizot drew on his legal background and acquired a considerable experience of the workings of French government, experience which contributed to his later political convictions.

In 1820, the assassination of the heir to the throne, the Duc de Berri, put an end to the *Doctrinaires*' ascendancy. Expelled from office, they took up the cudgels against the reactionary policies of the new ultra-royalist government in different ways. While Royer-Collard became the leader of the liberal opposition in the Chamber of Deputies, arguing trenchantly against measures to restrict freedom of the press and curtail the suffrage, Guizot, still too young to be a deputy, returned to his University professorship. He began to lecture on topics in French history and, in particular, on the history of representative government in Europe—topics which provided

him with a scarcely veiled means of attacking the ultra-royalist government which, by 1822, was dominated by a Girondin lawyer, Villèle.

From 1822 to 1827 the Villèle government embarked on an ambitious legislative programme which the liberal opposition saw as nothing less than an attempt to recreate an aristocratic society and government in France. The Villèle government appeared to be subverting the principle of civil equality on which French society had rested since 1789, substituting a regime of privilege instead. Among the bills it put forward were those to restrict the suffrage to large landholders, to censor the press and abolish University lectures, to restore primogeniture and entail in order to reconstruct a landed aristocracy in France, to strengthen the role of the clergy in the state and restrict certain careers, particularly in the military, to sons of the nobility. It was even rumoured that the Villèle government might restrict the mobility of labour and the freedom of contracts. Guizot quickly became the leading intellectual inspiration of the liberal opposition to the ultra-royalist government. But it was not long before the government hit back by suspending University lectures.

Guizot now had to rely on income from writing to keep himself. But he was not content to do only that. He threw himself into active opposition by helping to organize two liberal pressure groups, the Society for Christian Morality and *Aide-toi, le ciel t'aidera*. These liberal groups arranged public meetings, and encouraged publications about a wide range of liberal causes such as the emancipation of slaves in the French colonies and the new penitentiary system. But underlying all these particular causes was a larger theme, the need to defend free institutions or representative government in France—to avert the threat that the reactionary Charles X, who succeeded his more tolerant brother in 1824, might conspire with the ultra-royalists and dispense with the Constitutional Charter which had established France's new liberties in 1814. The essential liberalism of "young France," when civil liberty and representative government were called into doubt, was revealed by public anxieties over the coronation of Charles X, when the King dramatically prostrated himself before the Archbishop of Paris. For perhaps the most worrying feature of ultra-royalist government was the favour it showed the Church and the influence over public policy which the higher clergy had allegedly regained, to the point, it seemed, of

threatening the very distinction between Church and State. The result was a resurgent anticlericalism in France, excited especially by the processions of expiation for “the sins of the Revolution” organized by the government and the higher clergy throughout the country. This virulent anticlericalism co-existed, strangely, with a taste for the medieval which had become all the rage in the 1820s.

By 1827 French public opinion had turned decisively against the ultraroyalists and Villèle. Elections in that year returned a majority hostile to the government, and Villèle’s resignation paved the way for a moderate government under Martignac. But how would Charles X react? His opinions were known to be hostile to the system of representative government with which his older brother had endowed France, with the *de facto* responsibility of ministers to a majority in the Chamber, even when the strict letter of the Charter of 1814 had left ambiguous the question of whether ministers were responsible finally to the King or a majority in Chamber. The issue looming large by 1827, therefore, was whether Charles X would acquiesce in representative government. Or, would he attempt to defy the Chamber, replacing the new ministry with men favourable to his own views? For that reason the Martignac Ministry carried with it the hopes of liberal France.

One of the first acts of the Martignac Ministry was to lift the ban on University lectures. Guizot seized the opportunity offered. He announced that he would give a course of lectures on the “History of Civilization in Europe.” It was clear that his lectures—along with others given by Victor Cousin on philosophy and Villemain on eighteenth-century French literature—would become a major event, an event not just intellectual but political in character. For they coincided with the mounting crisis about the future of representative government in France. He had already acquired a reputation as the most formidable of the younger Doctrinaires, a reputation which even gave him a certain ascendancy over his seniors such as Royer-Collard and Barante. Doubtless he wanted to confirm and extend that reputation by means of his lectures—for he would soon reach the age at which he could qualify for election to the Chamber and launch a political career.

It was, to say the least, a dramatic moment. The lecture hall at the Old Sorbonne where Guizot began his lectures on a spring day in 1828 was

teeming with an excited crowd, young and committed. But just what were they committed to? They were committed to “free” institutions, to a representative form of government which would, they believed, put France, along with England, at the forefront of European civilization. They were excited because of the threat to those institutions. That threat had, for the moment, abated. But it might soon return. Hence they looked to Guizot for instruction about the direction of social and political change in France. Nor were they to be disappointed.

Guizot was now far better prepared by the historical studies he had undertaken during his years in the wilderness after 1820. His collections of documents on French and English history, his study of the development of representative government in Europe as well as lectures on medieval French history and a subsequent book on the English Civil War, had enabled him to examine the development of European institutions at crucial junctures. At the same time his administrative experience, especially when charged with overseeing the administration of communes and departments in 1819–20, and his participation in the political debate against the ultra-royalist government after 1820—the “Great Debate”—had reinforced both his analytical skills and his political convictions.

Just how did the Great Debate of the 1820s contribute to Guizot’s *History of Civilization in Europe*? During the debate the Doctrinaires had been obliged to use history as evidence in order to demonstrate how French institutions had been transformed long before 1789, as part of their argument that the ultra-royalist project of recreating an aristocratic society in France was not only unjust but impossible. “The destruction of aristocracy” in France had become the Doctrinaires’ leading theme in the 1820s, a destruction they traced back into the middle ages. They became adept at showing how the corporate character of an “aristocratic” society of fixed ranks had—through the growth of towns, the development of a market economy and an increasing social division of labour—steadily been eroded, and prepared the way for a “democratic” society, organized on the basis of civil equality and individual rights. They traced the gradual collapse of the original castes of feudal society, the nobles and the serfs, into a new intermediate social condition, that of the middle classes or bourgeoisie. It was this transformation of the structure of society which Guizot was to call the “rise of the middle classes.”

But if Guizot and the other Doctrinaires could congratulate themselves on a social transformation which conformed to their intuitions of justice, they had serious reservations about the political changes which had accompanied this social transformation in France. For the destruction of aristocracy or “atomization” of society—as Royer-Collard called it in a famous speech to the Chamber in 1822—had been accomplished through the “centralization” of government, that is, through the concentration of power in the French Crown and creation of a bureaucratic form of the state. That, Royer-Collard observed sadly, was how the French had become “an administered people.”

Guizot had largely shaped this argument, drawing on his experience in the Ministry of the Interior and fully aware of the extent to which local autonomy in France had been destroyed, with the communes reduced simply to the passive agents of central government. Barante, with whom he worked closely, had made the argument central to his book *Aristocracy and the Communes* (1822). Barante argued that, in contrast to England, France in the middle ages had witnessed an alliance develop between the communes, seeking enfranchisement from the tyranny of powerful local lords, and an originally weak Crown. Both royalty and the communes had benefited from this alliance directed against the feudal aristocracy. But the unfortunate result was that the communes acquiesced in the transfer of political rights to the Crown until the latter successfully claimed, by the seventeenth century, a monopoly of “sovereign” authority and power. Guizot deepened the contrast between England and France in this respect in his *Essays on the History of France*, also published in 1822—arguing that a centralized form of feudalism in England, where a powerful Crown was needed after the Norman Conquest to keep a hostile population under control, led the English aristocracy by the thirteenth century to resist royal encroachments and form an alliance with leaders of the Commons. That alliance in due course forced the English Crown to share “sovereign” power with parliament and created an open or “natural” aristocracy based on wealth and education as well as birth. Thus, the Doctrinaires identified a crucial difference between the structure of society and government in France and England. In England a powerful “natural aristocracy” protected local autonomy, whereas in France the destruction of local autonomy had been an unintended consequence of the destruction of aristocracy.

In the same year (1822), then, all the leading Doctrinaires deployed the same argument to account for the social and political condition of France after the Revolution—the collapse of the original castes of feudal society into a new middle-class condition (atomization) had been accompanied by an excessive concentration of power at the centre (centralization), in a bureaucratic form of the state. Guizot, in particular, emphasized that France had developed a bureaucratic despotism which Europe had not seen since the heyday of the Roman Empire, when the municipal system was subject to a similar strait-jacket imposed from the centre. Since 1818 he had argued for the introduction of the elective principle and the responsibility of local agents to local councils within their sphere of interests. His experience, in 1819–20, as Director of Local Government had reinforced his belief in decentralization, and after being dismissed from government in 1820, he had argued in his *Origins of Representative Government in Europe* (1822) that France had moved from excessive decentralization to excessive centralization and that the time was ripe to reject the latter.

By 1828, Guizot's message was even more emphatic. It was the task of the new generation of the 1820s to undo the excessive centralization of French government—originally the work of Richelieu and Louis XIV but restored by Napoleon—and find a new balance between central power and local autonomy. Like Barante, he believed that representative government could only succeed with free local as well as national institutions, both contributing to the formation of a natural aristocracy or open political elite which could bring classes together locally and draw back power from central government. Guizot introduces this agenda in an early lecture of 1828 by analysing the decomposition of the Roman Empire in the West—attributing it to an administrative despotism which had destroyed local autonomy, impoverished the cities, undermined local elites and left the population unable to defend themselves against the Germanic invaders. Roman unity had been imposed from above rather than developing from below. And so, once the Imperial administrative machine was shattered, everything became local again, despite vain attempts by a late emperor to introduce something like representative government. It was too late. Yet Guizot does not only open the *History of Civilization in Europe* with an analysis of the consequences of Roman despotism. He returns to the theme in his final lecture, when he

considers the consequences for eighteenth-century France of the administrative despotism constructed by Richelieu and Louis XIV in the seventeenth century. He implies that it was the primary cause of the failure to reform French institutions in the eighteenth century and thus of violent revolution in 1789. In that way he is able to identify the chief virtue of representative institutions as that of providing a peaceful means of adjusting civil law and government to changes in the structure of society.

If Guizot had a political agenda firmly in mind, he was also anxious that liberal enthusiasm unleashed by the fall of the ultra-royalist government in 1827 should not get out of control, that it should remain constructive. And it was that motive which prevailed when he laid out his larger historical argument in the second lecture, before revealing his political agenda. Guizot seeks to distinguish European from other civilizations, and his argument illustrates the way the political context of 1827–8 contributed to the richness of his lectures. For, mindful of the class conflicts raging in France as well as rampant anticlericalism, Guizot goes out of his way to do justice to the different values and institutions which, after the fall of the Roman Empire, contributed to the amalgam which became “Europe.” His theme is that of pluralism. What distinguishes European from other civilizations is that no *one* value or institution has ever won complete supremacy or been able to drive the others underground. In setting out this argument about pluralism Guizot identifies three chief components of European civilization at its outset: Roman, Christian and Germanic. In each case he identifies both values or principles and institutions which gradually helped to constitute European society. From Rome, he argues, Europe has received on the one hand the institution of the municipality or commune, with the value of self-government or local liberty; and, on the other hand, the idea of a sovereign power and uniform civil legislation—the idea of a state—carried by the memory of the Emperor. The second constituent Guizot explores is the Christian Church and its moral beliefs—on the one hand, the insistence that there is a moral law superior to all human legislation and which ought to serve as a criterion for it; on the other, an ecclesiastical government which, in protecting itself from secular encroachments after the fall of the Roman Empire in the West, laid the foundation for liberty of conscience by defending the separation of spiritual and temporal power.

The third constituent was Germanic—the bond between warriors and their leaders which, voluntary at the outset, became the germ of feudal or aristocratic organization centuries later; and the sentiment of individual independence and the relish for it, which helped to introduce an idea of liberty very different from that associated with the city-states of antiquity.

The competition of these values or principles and institutions becomes, in Guizot's hands, the key to the development of European civilization. Firstly, it helps to account for a very long period of gestation, the five or six hundred years after the fall of Rome before Europe really achieved coherence and self-consciousness. Secondly, it helps to account for the almost unlimited potential retained by European civilization—for the diversity and competition of its elements means that it had not exhausted itself in an initial flowering in the fashion of ancient Greece, or become merely stationary like ancient Egypt or modern China. "While in other civilizations, the exclusive, or, at least, the excessively preponderating dominion of a single principle, of a single form, has been the cause of tyranny, in modern Europe the diversity of elements which constitute the social order, the impossibility under which they have been placed of excluding each other, have given birth to the freedom which prevails in the present day."

Clearly, Guizot's insistence on the pluralism of European civilization in contrast to the unity of other civilizations was designed to assuage class conflict in France in his own day—to lead the nobility, clergy and the bourgeoisie to understand their respective contributions to European development. But that didactic intent did not make the insight any less profound or true. Nor did it prevent Guizot from attributing a creative role to class conflict in Europe later in the lectures. Altogether, the second lecture gives the reader an immediate taste of what becomes the dominant flavour of the 1828 lectures—the sheer quality and intensity of thought compressed into relatively few pages, the extraordinary general ideas which Guizot deploys to penetrate below the surface of events to reveal the changing structure of European society. Ironically, the short time he had to prepare his text after the Martignac government lifted the ban on University lectures helped to concentrate Guizot's mind, helping him to make the most of the analytical potential of the ideas of atomization and centralization which had played such a part in the Great Debate of the 1820s. With only a few months at his