

The Dialectic of the Centrality of the Western Ego and the Other in the Concept of Orientalism

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Abstract:

The curiosity of Europe during the European Crusades was driven to explore the scientific, political and Renaissance East, with the logic of binaries as a rooted element in Western philosophy, considering that the entire universe is built on two opposing, conflicting sides, just like the relationship between man and nature in Greek thought, where man is the centre and nature is the object of this centre, the ego.

In this logic, the ego becomes the negation of the other and is always associated with control, management and organisation. This is the philosophy adopted by the discourse of Orientalism, which combs the East with anthropological, historical and religious studies in order to reveal its own and its transcendent identity through the Other that is behind it. In doing so, it has made the East a mirror of its exaggerated, superiority-driven tendency to define its boundaries, revealing its inability to free itself and liberate itself from the thought of binaries and its representations of the ego and the other, and the culture of difference.

Keywords: Self, Other, Orientalism, Difference, Dialogue.

Introduction:

Anyone who reflects on the history of European thought since the Enlightenment and through the colonial period realises the extent of the connection between the emergence of this European self-identity and modernity, which has consecrated a purpose for which the strange Other has no merit to contribute to its shaping. By modelling systems of knowledge and civilisation, it has deprived the other of any civilising effect, to the point of almost abolishing the differences of form, size and colour, because what is required is that only its original copy remains. Myth, superstition and magic, as well as the semiotics of the Eastern sciences, were excluded on the grounds that they were outside the normative and did not even enter the realm of the irrational. Its role - the Other - was limited to that of a pathological case that required a scientific diagnosis to highlight the symptoms of the disease of backwardness in order to find a "scientific" modernist "cure" in the Enlightenment pattern.

In this way, Orientalism has been used as a pretext to penetrate and expose the intellectual structure and all that is associated with it in terms of customs, traditions, language and religion, especially of Eastern societies, and to gradually infiltrate the depths of this Other, trying to implant ideas and values that promote the superiority of Western civilisation and the absolute unity of the Western mind, which imprints the racist and ethnic existential view of this different Other, and at the same time the contempt and inferiority of everything associated with Eastern culture.

In the face of this Western self-closure, there is no civilisational communication, so a revolution of the other must be introduced into the structure of philosophical civilisational discourse. Therefore, first of all, we ask about the linguistic and terminological concept of Orientalism and its historical context? Secondly, about the impact of the violent shocks that the discourse of

reason has received from these accusations directed against the Other? And the horizon of the philosophy of difference, in which the other Other declares the legitimacy of its presence?

First: Orientalism: historical background and concept:

1. Orientalism in language:

Linguistic dictionaries do not refer to the term “Orientalism”, nor is the word itself mentioned. Rather, the word "المشرق" (the Orient) is mentioned, which is a word derived from the word "الشرق" (the East)¹, where the Intermediate Dictionary states in the first part: “The sun rose “شرق الشمس” in the East (شرقا) and rose (شروقا²).

In Lisan al-Arab (The Arabic Language), under the root “شرق”: [The sun rose (شرق الشمس) in the east, which means it rose (تشرق) and the name of the place is “المشرق” [...] and “تشرق” means to take from the direction of the east, as it is said: How different are the east and the west, and they went east “الشرق” and everything that comes from the east has risen “شرقاً”³.

“الإستشراق” (Orientalism) is derived from the word “الشرق” (the east) by adding the letters alif, sin and ta’, and its meaning is the search for the East, not the geographical East, but the search for the sciences, literatures, languages and religions of the East⁴. In general, its meaning is: the extraction and manifestation of the civilisations, sciences and knowledge that exist in the lands of the East, but not in the environment of the one who seeks them.

As far as European languages are concerned, there is another opinion that does not associate the word “الشرق” (the east) with the geographical location, but rather gives it a moral connotation, which means ascent, light and brightness, as opposed to the setting, which means decline and end⁵.

In the same context, the term “Orient” in European studies refers to the region of the East, which is meant by the term “Oriental studies”, which is distinguished by a moral character, which is “Morgenland”, which means the land of the morning, and it is known that the sun rises in the morning, and this connotation has shifted from the geographical location to focus on the meaning of the morning, which includes the meaning of light and wakefulness, as opposed to the term “Abendland”, which means darkness and rest⁶.

In the same vein, “Rudi Barrat” considers that “Orientalism is a science specialised in the understanding of language in particular, and the closest thing to it is to think about the name given to it. Istishraq (Orientalism) is derived from the word ‘al-Sharq’ (the East), and the word ‘al-Sharq’ means the place where the sun rises”^{*}.

It seems that the concept of Orientalism and the concept of the East are among the concepts that pose a problem in the overall linguistic meanings that they have assumed in the various Arab and Western cultures, and the intended meaning is not precisely clear, because it is not easy to grasp the term because it is the product of a living experience of contradictions,

¹- Muhammad Shams al-Hakam bin Abd al-Samad: The Historical Framework of Orientalists’ Views on Quranic Readings: An Analytical Study, Master’s Thesis in the Fundamentals of Religion, Academy of Islamic Studies, University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, 2006, p. 29.

²- Al-Muajam Al-Waseet, Part 1, Arabic Language Academy, Cairo, p. 482.

³- Ibn Manzur: Lisan al-Arab, entry “Sharq”, p. 6922, accessed via the website wiki.dorar-aliraq.net.

⁴- Muhammad Shams al-Hakam bin Abd al-Samad, The Historical Framework of Orientalists’ Views on Quranic Readings, reference cited above.

⁵- Al-Sayyid Muhammad al-Shahed: Orientalism and the Methodology of Critique Among Contemporary Muslims, Al-Ijtihad, Year 6, 1994, Issue 22, pp. 191-211.

⁶- Mazen bin Salah Mutbaki: Orientalism and Intellectual Trends in Islamic History, Riyadh, King Fahd National Library, 1995, p. 48.

* Rudi Paret, a German Orientalist who studied Semitic, Turkish and Persian languages at the University of Tübingen from 1920 to 1924, with a focus on Arabic and Islamic studies, particularly the Qur’an. - R. Barrett: Arab-Islamic Studies in German Universities, translated by Mustafa Maher, Dar Al-Kitab Al-Arabi, Cairo, 1967, pp. 11-12.

dialectics and conflicts between two faiths, two cultures and two civilisations, and this will be observed at the level of terminology.

2. Conceptually, Orientalism is in fact an integral part of the issue of the civilisational conflict between the Islamic world and the Western world. It can be said that Orientalism is the intellectual background of this conflict, and therefore it should not be underestimated by considering it as a separate issue from the rest of the circles of the European-Islamic civilisational conflict.

As a concept, it is a general tendency and intellectual current that focuses on conducting various studies on the Islamic East, including its civilisation, religion, literature, languages and culture. It is the science of the East or the Eastern world and everything related to it in terms of spiritual forces and literary knowledge that have contributed to the formation of the culture of the entire world. This is why it is also called the science of the history of the human mind, and it is considered by some to be one of the most important and dangerous human sciences, both in terms of the subject itself and in terms of the recognition of the human mind and the exchange of influences between the two opposing worlds throughout history¹.

Orientalism has contributed to the crystallisation and formulation of European perceptions of Islam, shaping Western attitudes towards Islam and the East in general over many centuries, and continues to do so. By distorting its image rather than the true image, and this is in the context of the relationship between the science of Orientalism and proselytism, as stated in Edward Said's definition: "Orientalism is a pattern of Western projection onto the East and the will to control it"².

It is difficult to determine the earliest origins of Orientalism*. Some trace it back to the first contacts between Muslims and Christians during Islamic rule in Al-Andalus, where the Church played an important role in this prejudice³. Others link it to the Crusades, where the defeat of the West by the Muslims in these wars led to an increase in religious intolerance, which was reflected in Orientalism.

In 1311, the Council of Vienne decreed the establishment of specialised schools for the study of Arabic and Hebrew in several Western universities, which became known as the Chairs of Oriental Studies⁴.

However, it is generally agreed that the major turning point in shaping the modern concept of Orientalism was the French campaign led by Napoleon Bonaparte in Egypt in 1798. This campaign combined military dominance with the acquisition of knowledge, as evidenced by the presence of a large number of Orientalists who collaborated on the work 'Description of Egypt'.

During this century, European states expanded into the Far East and sent various missions to learn about the Arab peoples and the possibility of occupying their lands. Many travellers succeeded in acquiring new knowledge and bringing it back to their home countries⁵.

It seems that the Orientalist movement began in the 8th century AD, with theological Orientalism as a result of religious motivations aimed at proselytising, as evidenced by the fact that the earliest Latin translation of the Koran dates back to 1143 AD - it undertook to present

¹- Ajwidi, *The Science of the East and the History of Civilisation*, Al-Zahraa, 1970, pp. 11-14.

²- Edward Said, *Orientalism*, translated by Kamal Abu Deeb, Arab Research Foundation, 7th edition, 2005, p. 12.

* The concept of Orientalism did not appear in Europe until the late 18th century. It first appeared in England in 1779 and in France in 1799, and was included in the dictionary of the French Academy in 1838.

³- Muhammad Fathallah Al-Zubaidi, *The Phenomenon of the Spread of Islam and the Attitude of Some Orientalists Towards It*, Dar Al-Ulum, 1983, p. 44.

⁴- Iyad Muhammad Zadam, *The Orientalist Movement from the Perspective of Abu Al-Qasim Abdullah*, Al-Qurtas Magazine, January 2017, Issue 2, p. 273.

⁵- Ahmed Abdel Rahim Al-Sayeh, *Orientalism in the Balance of Islamic Thought Criticism*, 1st edition, Egyptian House, 1996, p. 24.

the content of the idea and did not care about the style of the original Arabic and its formulation¹.

Orientalism has taken on the pretext of penetrating the cultural, social and religious structures of the “other”, different and alien to the Western model, in order to establish the principle of Western civilisational superiority, for example by presenting the West as the lover of security and peace, science and light, and accusing Islam and the various “others” of hostility, darkness and ignorance², to feed inferiority and superiority, to disfigure everything related to Eastern culture, such as fighting the Arabic language and spreading European languages, and encouraging the “others” to use colloquial and local dialects.

Orientalism also paved the way for colonialism, as it contributed to its embodiment on the ground, because as a concept it is synonymous with the West’s desire to dominate the East and achieve its expansionist ambitions, and the evidence of this is the emergence of Orientalism in the great and powerful countries such as England, France, Germany and Italy, and most of these countries have colonial ambitions that were achieved with the instigation of a group of Orientalists known for their extremism of Western centrism.

With reference to Edward Said³, Orientalism has clearly reflected this division that has formed in minds as a Western method of controlling and possessing sovereignty over the East. It is the way in which the West continues to engage with the East in order to assert the position of the East within the European experience - the self (the West) carrying positive values and the Eastern Other carrying negative values.

As a result of these negative connotations of the concept of Orientalism, specialists held the International Orientalist Conference in Paris in 1973, the last conference to bear this name, and the new terminology became “Conferences on the Human Sciences related to the Islamic World Regions”⁴.

In reality, however, it is impossible to change the semantic and semiotic domain of this concept. That is to say, the strategy of this intellectual current among its followers confirms the necessity of targeting the East and all regions that harm the interests of the Western intellectual system.

Second: The Inflated Western Self (The Complex of Superiority)

Since the early days of Orientalism, the West has worked to build a historical wall that separates it from other cultures, defining its own specificities and excluding all foreign elements that contributed to its formation. This has turned the self into a subject and the other into an external object that can be studied and examined on various levels - religion, culture, language, literature, and everything related to the customs and way of life of the East. In Lyotard’s words, the Western self, in its unified terminology, gathers the scattered, homogenises the heterogeneous, and erases differences from the protrusions of ideas and things. It does not recognise the foreignness of the foreigner, imposes familiarity on everyone and becomes, in principle, the representative of everyone, then the one who does not represent anyone else, because no one remains at the top⁵.

It is one and unique in the face of the indistinguishable rest of the world, crystallising an identity project based on the glorification of the self, with the invocation of the other, but not

¹- Iyad Zadam Muhammad, *The Orientalist Movement from the Perspective of Abu Al-Qasim Abdullah*, cited above, p. 273.

²- Abdelkader Daoud Abdel Ali, *Orientalism and Islamic Studies*, Dar Al-Furqan for Publishing and Distribution, 2001, p. 29.

³- Edward Said, *Orientalism: Knowledge, Power, Creation*, translated by Kamal Abu Deeb, Arab Research Foundation, Beirut, Lebanon, 5th edition, 2005, p. 39.

⁴- Abdul Nabi Astif, *Towards a New Orientalism*, Al-Ijtihad Magazine, Beirut, issues 50-51, 13th year, 2001, p. 39.

*Lyotard calls the contract of superiority and arrogance the terror of the higher over the lower.

⁵- F. Lyotard, *Le postmoderne expliqué aux enfants*, édition GALILLEE, pp. 18-19.

as a factor in the construction of this self, but as the worst negative image that this other can reflect in relation to this self. If this self is enlightened, then the other is dark; if it is rational, then the other is mythical and superstitious; and if it is advanced, then the other is backward. And so on¹.

Edward Said is considered one of the most objective and accurate critics of the discourse of Orientalism, as he has presented serious scholarly material, using modern methods of philosophical criticism to establish ideas and highlight the binary discourse between the East and the West, treating them as opposites: “The East is Eastern to them because it is not Western, for example, they claim that the East is imaginary because the West is rational, the East is sick because the West is healthy,” etc².

Edward Said recognises this relationship as an unequal one in which the West sees itself as an inflated, purposeful entity and the East as the targeted “other”, a subordinate relationship. As a result, the function of Orientalism becomes one of guidance and control, with a discourse that condescends to the East, and a literature that justifies colonialism on the basis of the East’s alleged deficiency and incapacity, which the arrogant Orientalist consumes and exploits and then attributes to himself³.

If, for example, an intellectual from the Eastern world raises an issue from the problems of his society, the specialists involved in the ideological conflict will confront him with highly adapted positions. If the intellectual proposes incorrect solutions to this problem, they will be driven deeper into error, and if they bring out a part of the truth, these specialists will do their utmost to either distance this part or to nullify its effect, especially if it is related to the dynamics of ideas or the renaissance of the Islamic world.

In this regard, Malik Bin Nabi states: “Whenever this Muslim thinker or these Muslims propose a solution to a problem, these specialists rush to study this solution, and even if it contains some beneficial elements, they make every effort to diminish its significance and reduce its value so that it does not benefit”⁴.

The discourse of Orientalism entrenches the principle of the West’s excessive self-centredness and subordination of the other, deepening the gulf of conflict between the East and the West by focusing on the cultural differences within the East in the same region. That is, cultural diversity, and it demands power, because “the self has never been liberated from its original burdens and impurities, traceable to the system of social domination”⁵.

The candid confession of the Austrian philosopher Hans Koechler provides clear evidence of this. In his book “The Tension Between the West and the Muslims: Causes and Remedies, Koechler eloquently describes Western arrogance and pride towards the Islamic world in general and the Arab world in particular. He exposes the attempts to paint the wall of the East-West conflict with a religious veneer and to create peripheral conflict hotspots to serve Western hegemony and Western arrogance.

Koechler goes on to say that prejudices against Islam and Arab civilisation have been reinforced and strengthened over the past decade. The attempt to isolate anyone who calls on the West to engage in dialogue with Arabs and Muslims as equal partners can no longer be justified, because such isolation fits into a comprehensive Western plan aimed at isolating the

¹- Nasreddine Bin Ghanissa, *On the Crisis of Identity and the Stakes of Modernity in the Age of Globalisation*, Dhahf and Ikhtilaf Publications, 1st edition, 2012, p. 38.

²- Edward Said, *Orientalism*, cited above, p. 14.

³- Ibid, p. 14.

⁴- Malek Bennabi, *The Production of Orientalists and Its Impact on Islamic Thought*, Dar Al-Irshad for Printing and Publishing, Beirut, 1969, p. 14.

⁵- Edward Said, *Orientalism*, cited above, p. [specific page required].

Arab-Islamic world, as evidenced by the United States' project for a "New Middle East", the first signs of which appeared during the 2003 invasion of Iraq¹.

The expansion of the Western ego has not been satisfied with the stereotypical image of Orientalism, but has gone beyond it to a new Orientalist discourse based on the New World Order and the policy of sanctions against the Arab-Islamic and Eastern world in general, without affecting the Western ego.

The practice of the Security Council in adopting resolutions shows "the extent to which this Council - especially when the interests of the permanent members require it - does not hesitate to fabricate a supposed threat to international peace in order to be able to impose intervention measures in a country in a certain region". This creates "a remarkable contradiction between the rules of international law, which are committed to human rights, and the remnants of the old international law, which are based on the principles of power and national interests"².

Blaise Pascal*, in one of his texts, diagnoses this illness as the "illness of the unitary and monistic power", where he states: "The ego has two characteristics: from one point of view, it is inherently unjust, because it makes itself the centre of everything, and from another point of view, it is oppressive towards others, because it wants to enslave them, since every 'ego' is an enemy and wants to be the dominant force over the whole"³. The concept of the ego is based on control, the control of the self over what it takes as its object, whether that object is natural things or other people. Thus the position, meaning and function of the Other is defined in Orientalist thought as either an object of study, an enemy, or a bridge through which the self can know itself. As Jean-Paul Sartre says: "I need the mediation of the Other in order to be what I am"⁴, meaning that the recognition of the Other guarantees the actual existence and effective being of the Self, despite the fact that the Other is not equal to the Self. The Other is a necessary existential means for the Self⁵.

In the same context of the "inflation of the Western ego", Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit highlights the position of the Western self, where the subject is uniquely endowed with a pure self-consciousness that is distinct from the Other. The self is centred on itself without paying attention to the other, and Hegel calls this consciousness "naïve and narcissistic... it is a simple and equal existence for itself, i.e. it negates everything that is other, for its essence and absolute object are for the ego"⁶. The collision between the ego and the other occurs when the ego becomes aware of the other as a consciousness separate from and external to its own self-consciousness. Hegel emphasises the necessity for the self to extinguish itself in its self-awareness of any other essence, while at the same time recognising the existence of the Other as an essence. This is the necessity for the completion of the trajectory of self-consciousness, and this is what he embodied in the dialectic of master and slave.

In the same context, Hegel says: "Self-consciousness is itself and for itself, i.e. it is so only in so far as it achieves the recognition of its own self from another self-consciousness"⁷.

¹- Hans Köchler, *The Tense Relationship Between the West and the Muslims: Causes and Solutions*, translated and presented by Hamid Lashhab, Jadawel, 1st edition, Lebanon, 2013, p. 16.

²- Hans Köchler, *ibid*, pp. 81-82

*Blaise Pascal (19 June 1623 - 19 August 1662) was a French physicist, mathematician and philosopher. - Accessed via: [Blaise Pascal](https://ar.wikipedia.org/Blaise_Pascal).

³- Mohammed Abed Al-Jabri, **Islam and the West: The Self and the Other**, The First Book, Series of Thought and Criticism, The Arab Network for Research and Publishing, year, p. [specific page needed].

⁴- Jean-Paul Sartre, *L'être et le néant essai d'ontologie phénoménologique*, Gallimard, 1943, p. 267.

⁵- *Op.cit.* p267.

⁶- Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, translated by Mustafa Safwan, Dar Al-Tali'a, Beirut, 3rd edition, 2001, p. 144.

⁷- Alexander Kojève, *The Master-Slave Dialectic from the Introduction to the Reading of Hegel*, translated by Wafa Shaban, within the journal *Contemporary Arab Thought*, Center for National Development, Kuwait, year, issues 114-115, p. 49.

It is noteworthy that this struggle for existence and appearance, which inevitably belongs to the ego that surpasses the other who has chosen to live in slavery, is what makes the ego feel its sovereignty and hegemony. "The two self-consciousnesses are opposed, the self-consciousness is primarily opposed to itself, it is the drama of inequality between the slave and the master¹".

This is a philosophical vision that prepares a culture of control, hegemony, and intellectual and civilisational centralism by planting ideas of weakness, contempt, and inferiority in order to legitimise colonialism and the centrality of the Western self. Hegel pursued this by excluding the Eastern origin in any beginning of history, making the Greek man a myth that inaugurated the beginning of Western rational thought, while forgetting the great Eastern philosophers such as Confucius and Buddha, and the scholars of Islamic civilisation and its philosophers.

As for Michel Foucault, he found in the Western idea of the East that "it is the result of deep historical, political and social sediments that have led it to view the East with this inferiority, and therefore it is necessary to understand the tremendous system that Western civilisation has created, by which it has been able to dominate the Other and extract it for us in the form that it desires". That is, the discourse beyond Orientalism and the procedures it has followed to reach this level of power and hegemony: external procedures of exclusion, so that there is no truth except what the mind produces. Internal procedures of exclusion, including the interpretation and explanation that accompanies the original discourse², which surrounds the discourse with a cognitive framework that denies its absurdity, meaninglessness and arbitrariness, and the concept of the author, which limits the openness of the discourse in order to tie it to the self and individualit³.

The mind monopolizes the tools of language and of civilisation that wish to control the Other, such as the authority of knowledge, the authority of the State, and the authority of priority in entering the history of consciousness. But Foucault argues that the mind cannot fulfil its function and continue to exist without this Other⁴.

In this context, Muhammad Arkoun directs many criticisms at the Orientalist discourse and the Orientalist himself, emphasising the need to pay attention to the negatively charged Western position that takes root in history, where the will to dominate prevails over the will to know. For Arkoun, modernity has two faces: a liberating, humanistic one and a selfish, utilitarian one. It is not the final image of human history, nor the reference to which everything is held accountable⁵.

Orientalism supported the complex of superiority and arrogance by attacking and distorting the Islamic religion. Malik bin Nabi divides Orientalists, according to their general attitude towards Islam and Muslims in their writings, into those who praise Islamic civilisation and a class of critics who distort its reputation⁶.

This is where we find the orientalist "Margoliouth", who questions the lineage of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). He states: "The name Abdullah is used for an unknown or fatherless child". Similarly, the Jewish Orientalist "Goldziher" asserts: "The majority of the

¹- Previously cited reference, p. 52.

²- Mustafa Hisham, *Beyond Orientalism: From Foucault to Edward Said*, Institute of World Studies, in *Questions of Reality and Its Answers*, available on the website: 2017 <https://alaalam.org>.

³- Michel Foucault, *The Order of Discourse*, translated by Mohamed Sbila, Dar Al-Tanweer, Beirut, 1984, p. 8.

⁴- Mustafa Hisham, *Beyond Orientalism*, cited above, p. [specific page required].

⁵- Mohammed Arkoun, *Islam, Europe and the West*, translated by Hashim Saleh, Dar Al-Saqi, Beirut, 2nd edition, 2001, p. 5.

⁶- Previously cited reference, p. 5.

Hadiths are merely the efforts of certain scholars from different periods and have no direct connection with the Prophet"¹.

"Gautier" also tried to undermine Islam through his writings. He writes: "This is the mentality and spirit of the Islamic religion, in its essence and in its subtleties, both apparent and hidden. It is an utterly sublime, divisive and unifying religion in the narrowest sense. It is irrational and incompatible with free thought, with little inclination to mysticism"². They added that it was a mixture of Judaism and Christianity that denied prophethood and cast doubt on the authenticity of the prophet's message and even his divine origin. The Orientalist "Noldeke" claimed: "The reason for the revelation received by Muhammad (peace be upon him) and his subsequent mission was his affliction with epilepsy"³.

The Western ego perceived Islam as a threat to its bloated, self-centred existence. It found in the Orientalist discourse a crucial means of deepening the divide between the West and the East, thereby strengthening the Western ego. This was achieved by using the Orientalists' strategies of fomenting missionary movements, undermining Islamic values and distorting the Islamic religion after failing to achieve their desired goals.

They also attacked the intellectual capacities of the Eastern Other, whom they considered incapable of creativity and organisation, in contrast to the Western ego, which has been characterised by completeness since the earliest days of Greek and Roman civilisation. This is emphasised by "Lyotard", who attributes to "Plato" the responsibility for the invention of unity and oneness⁴.

This sense of completeness as an image of this ego requires that the other appears as a disturbing factor that hinders its formation through a historical continuum between its civilisational links or through intersections with other civilisational spaces. This is confirmed by "Snouck Hurgronje" (1899) when he reviewed Edward Sachau's book "Muhammadan Law". He stated: "Islamic jurisprudence, in its general outlines, emphasises the difference between East and West. The distinction between the two is not merely a linguistic ritual, but indicates the fundamental and historical power relations between the two. Knowledge of the East and Islam promotes these differences and fosters a relationship of domination and superiority"⁵.

He suggested that Europe's dominance over the East was almost a fact of nature. This is what the advocates of the purity and originality of Greek thought seek to consolidate by reducing all Eastern heritage to a mere hybrid imitation of Western heritage. This is despite the fact that some historians of philosophy, such as "Émile Bréhier", in his introduction to his "History of Philosophy", note that it is difficult to locate the source of philosophy or to establish its beginnings at a specific time. It is impossible to ignore the intellectual similarities between the principle of the first Greek philosopher, Thales, that everything comes from water, and the creation poem that predates Thales by many centuries in Mesopotamia. Nevertheless, the Western cultural project rejects this, as the Western mind has endowed itself with an infinite quality for every theology and every different foreigner, defining its relationship with the other through values of infinity, absoluteness and unity that place the other in total subordination.

¹- Mohammed Abdul Salam and others, *Studies in Islamic Culture*, Alfalah Library, Kuwait, 5th edition, 1987, p. 112.

²- Goethe, *Introduction to the Study of Islamic Philosophy*, translated by Mohammed Youssef Musa, Cairo, 1945, p. 176.

³- Hanif Abdul Wadud bin Maqbul, *The Source of the Holy Quran According to Orientalists*, quoted in: *Symposium on the Holy Quran in Oriental Studies*, 8/9/2006, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, pp. 55-56.

⁴- J.F. Lyotard, *The Postmodern*, pp. 18-19.

⁵- Edward Said, *Orientalism (Power, Knowledge and Construction)*, p. 260.

The campaigns to exploit and expel the intellectuals of East and North Africa are clear evidence of the deepening of the principle of dependency.

This principle constantly reflects the deep-rooted anxiety within the inflated Western ego, and fosters an ever-increasing colonial sentiment in all its forms, especially in its contemporary guise. In essence, it represents the negative values of an "extraordinarily terrorist" mindset.

In the last decade, the Western media have witnessed a proliferation of literature dealing with Islam and Muslims from a popular point of view, written by individuals of Arab and Persian origin. These writers derive their credibility and expertise on Islamic issues from their status as victims of Islamic terrorism. Beyond the institutional emotional discourse in which these writings engage, their recommendations are nothing more than conflict ideology. As Vincent Geisser observes, their authors have no qualms about revealing their exterminationist intentions.

The domination of Europe over the East is asserted as an almost natural fact. This is what the advocates of the purity and originality of Greek thought try to confirm by relegating the entire Eastern heritage to a mere hybrid imitation of the Western heritage, despite the fact that some historians of philosophy, such as Émile Bréhier¹, have noted the difficulty of determining the origins of philosophy and proving its emergence at a specific time, since it is impossible to overlook the conceptual similarities between the first Greek philosopher, Thales, who claimed that all things came from water, and the beginning of the Creation Epic, which predates Thales by centuries in Mesopotamia².

However, this observation remains futile because the Western cultural project rejects it, and the Western mind has given itself the attribute of infinity for all its theology and foreign differences, defining its relationship with the Other through the values of infinity, absolutism and monism, which render the Other completely subordinate.

The campaigns to drain and expel the intellectual resources of the populations of the Middle East and North Africa are perhaps the clearest evidence of the deepening of the principle of subservience, which continually reflects the magnitude of the obsession inherent in the inflated Western self and fuels the ever-increasing colonial sentiment in all its forms, especially in its contemporary manifestation. For, at its core, it represents nothing other than the negative values of a "terrorist" intellect par excellence.

The last decade has seen the emergence in the Western media of a literature that addresses Islam and Muslims in a popular way, written by authors of Arab and Persian origin. These authors derive their credibility and expertise on Islamic affairs from being victims of Islamic terrorism. Beyond the institutional and emotional discourse that these writings engage in, what they essentially advocate is the ideology of conflict. As Vincent Geisser has observed, the authors feel no compunction about openly expressing their eradictory intentions³.

This is a new form of Orientalism, especially after the events of 11 September 2001 and the construction of the idea of the "Islamic threat". As Hans Köchler pointed out in a lecture, this development is accompanied by the attempt of the West, led by the United States, to "redefine Islam" or to imbue the Islamic world (in terms of reason, democratic logos, human rights, etc.) with Western value systems. This objective is being pursued not only through long-term geopolitical strategies, especially in the field of political and cultural propaganda, but also through a new type of "ideological crusade" using not only media events but also military technologies.

¹- George Zeinati, *Journeys into Western Philosophy*, 1st edition, Dar al-Muntakhab al-Arabi, 1993, p. 162.

²- Geisser Vincent, *The New Islamophobia*, La Découverte, Paris, 2003, p. 108.

³- Cited in: Nasreddine Ben Ghnassia, *Crisis of Identity and Challenges of Modernity in the Era of Globalisation*, pp. 131-132.

War is thus once again manifesting itself as a means of “civilisational re-education”, as is evident in the interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq¹, as well as in what the Americans have called the “New Middle East”, imbued with Western values in an attempt at “re-education” with Christian overtones. Therein lies the danger of this new Orientalist discourse, which will inevitably lead to a global conflict that will be difficult to resolve diplomatically, according to Hans Köchler.

Third: The Orientalist and the Other, and the Problem of Dialogue

The history of the Western mind’s self-criticism is considered to be the most important peculiarity of this mind, which has produced its cultural project, full of crises and ruptures that announce that the Western self is threatened by itself and by its modernist project, which has only served to objectify man and to deepen his alienation and closure towards the other who is different from him.

This critique and these ruptures also point to the failure of the values and slogans of the Enlightenment to improve human life in the way it had long claimed.

This Western model, with the help of the Orientalists, has made the Western mind and knowledge the measure of everything, which has cut off all real, objective and civilised communication, so that the more the transfer from the civilisation of the centre to the civilisations of the periphery increases, the more alienation increases, and the more alienation increases, the more reaction begins to appear, the defence of identity against alienation, and the adherence to the culture of the self against the culture of the other². This is indicated by many works of modern and contemporary Arab thought, where we find, for example, the Arab philosopher “Taha Abdel-Rahman”, who poses the problem of difference in the title of his book “The Arab Right to Philosophical Difference”, in which he states that one of the aspects of the responsibility of the Arab philosopher is to work on criticising this single thought, which has penetrated deeply into his people, and which deprives it of the manifestations of distinction and specificity, thus cutting off the grounds for giving and creativity, for there is no giving without distinction, nor creativity without specificity³.

It is certain, then, that difference based on consensus and intimacy, rather than violence and division, contributes more to the preservation and construction of the human community than the negation of this difference between them³.

Here is my attempt at an academic English translation of the Arabic text you provided:

The practices of Western subjectivity do not represent anything other than coercion, compulsion, and even coercion of the Other, in order for them to adopt the set of perceptions and concepts that it carries. This does not establish a dialogue of civilizations, but rather a clash of civilizations. For this discourse does not in any way contribute to the production of objective knowledge about the Islamic phenomenon. As long as it is not devoid of grave errors, the sociology of the Islamic phenomenon cannot accept it. It is merely a justification of the expert's position that these individuals try to attribute to themselves, and the presentation of the modernist alternative based on the historical enmity towards religion and civilization.

This is what "Edward Said" observed in his book "Orientalism", that since the end of the eighteenth century when Europe discovered the East within the context of its own era and heritage, its history has been transformed into a parable of antiquity and authenticity - the two functions that attracted Europe's interests in the acts of recognition and acknowledgement, from which Europe distanced itself when its own industrial, economic and cultural development

¹- Hans Küngler, *The Tension in the Relationship between the West and Muslims: Causes and Solutions*, cited above, p. [page number].

²- Hassan Hanafi, *Harvest of Time*, Volume 1, Issues, 1st edition, Dar Al Arabiyya lil-Ulum - Nashirun - Manshurat Al Ikhtilaf, 2007, p. 439.

³- Taha Abdel Rahman, *The Arab Right to Philosophical Difference*, Arab Cultural Centre, Casablanca, Morocco, 2nd edition, 2006, p. 17.

seemed to require casting the East away behind its back¹. Thus, the Western project alone, since the Enlightenment era, has monopolized the entire burden of experience on behalf of every human being, while the Arab project has receded for many centuries from the event, and lived through the suffering of what happens to the Other.

This denial of the other has led to a self-imposed insularity and a pathological state of immunity of the inflated ego. This has necessitated the emergence of thinkers from within the Western central self who have become known as “postmodern philosophers” or “philosophers of difference”. Their aim has been to demolish the legacy of absolute unity and to create a rupture with the unitary system of knowledge and civilisation.

In doing so, the Western central self has willingly and without coercion relinquished its epistemological and humanistic centrality at a time when the Western project is on the verge of becoming the global cultural and human project.

However, the Western self has come to recognise that each individual’s mind can be a valid locus of thought, and that each individual has the right to express his or her intellect in his or her own language. Instead of the sectoral division of the mind into Western and Eastern, we find that there are inexhaustible minds that belong to all people throughout the homeland of the Earth².

This is the recognition of the Other. Instead of inventing a single history of one’s own intellect and denying everything else, it establishes difference as a principle that transcends insularity and the complex of greatness and superiority, towards the legitimacy of recognising the other, as Jacques Derrida, for example, did through the strategy of deconstruction. This causes a gradual rupture within the central self that is difficult to resist. It is a discourse based on transcendence and transition that establishes a new knowledge based on nomadism and separation from roots, identity and connection. It is a doubt in all certainty, where the edge becomes the origin. It transcends the discourse of identities and the centrality of the self. Its deconstructive philosophy revives what is hidden in the graveyard of text or memory, freeing the ghosts and spectres that the intellect had silenced.

This critique is unique and has never been attempted before. It is a bold questioning of the foundations upon which the centrality of the Western self rests. It re-examines the concepts that make up the Western discourse, which is nothing more than a metaphysical discourse formed by a set of “truths” and concepts that have acquired a sacred aura over time. It then traces these deconstructed concepts back to the philosophical depths that have proved their dullness.

This process of destabilisation resembles a vertical excavation that begins with the voice and ends with the exclusion of writing³.

With this strategy, and within the framework of his reflections on the unthinkable in philosophy and the unspoken or repressed in metaphysics, Jacques Derrida clarified the nature of the relationship between the central self and the other, which, according to Derrida, is not only a reason for communication, but a condition for the existence of the self and the realisation of the ego, which, in Derrida’s words, is a digging towards the other in which one seeks one’s self⁴.

On the subject of terrorism, for example, Derrida believed that “although we can diagnose the causes of violence and terrorism, we cannot offer a magical solution to eliminate it, because it

¹- Geisser, Vincent: *The New Islamophobia*, p. 109.

²- Edward Said, *Reflections on Orientalism*, translated by Sobhi Al-Hadidi, Arab Studies and Publishing House, Beirut, 1997, p. 160.

³- Muta’ Safadi, *Critique of Western Reason: Modernity and Postmodernity*, National Development Centre, Beirut, 1990, pp. 6-8.

⁴- Sarah Kaufman and Roger Laporte, *Introduction to the Philosophy of Jacques Derrida: Deconstructing Metaphysics and Evoking the Trace**, translated by Idris Kthir, Azzeddine Al-Khatibi, East Africa, 2nd edition, 1994, p. 15.

is a symptom of an autoimmune disorder. Therefore, when we meet the other, we must keep a safe distance and respect the principle of unconditional hospitality... We must acknowledge the atrocity of our own crimes, and without this acknowledgement and appreciation of the other, who is free from Abrahamic religious dictates and the pursuit of social, economic and even political gains, considering that forgiveness has transcended the symmetrical relationship between individuals and has become a demand between entities, institutions and states, it would not be possible to speak of a desire for coexistence”¹.

Derrida’s adoption of recognition and appreciation contrasted with his rejection of the idea of tolerance, which he saw as indicative of centrism, subjectivity and monism, as theological and metaphysical concepts of religious origin, making it close to benevolence and bearing injustice, and emanating from a single party, the victim, thus losing its meaning and moral and social efficacy, only complicating the crisis. Here lies the contradiction between Derrida and Habermas, who agreed with him on the need to review and criticise the Western heritage, but built the idea of communication on tolerance, despite its religious origins and unipolar nature. Furthermore, Jacques Derrida does not want to deconstruct the metaphysical meanings based on the rationality known to modernity, which has led to exclusion and marginalisation and the exclusion of all that is religious. Instead, he seeks a more radical and expansive rationality. However, these attempts to transcend the centrality of the Western self and its contempt and inferiority by establishing a new discourse that accommodates the other, remain questionable and postponed as long as there is no real overcoming of all the dogmatism behind the transcendent self, even with these contemporary philosophers, the postmodern philosophers. For “Jacques Derrida”, despite what may seem to be at odds with modern rationality and the centrality of the self, turns out to be the best defender of the humanist tendency. He does not imagine a rupture with this tendency, but considers any rupture with it as not final².

In his book “Critique of Western Reason”, Muta Safadi states: “The task of postmodern thought was to finally overturn the quasi-relationship between the Western cultural project and the other cultural project: to give the latter a role more than that of objection, and the ability to refute the resemblance, by bringing it to the forefront of the stage as the original author and actor, practising the negation of what it writes and represents. For the agent of naming has finally entered the stage and is no longer confined to the wings. The objector has become the counterpart of what is objected to, accepted by it and competing with it”³.

This means that the positive aspect of postmodernism is that it has actualised the idea of the constructive Other, which helps any cultural unity to maintain its apparent unity. Thus, Eastern peoples and religions, such as Islam, have tended to revive their historical identity and reject the challenges and hegemony of modernity, and the critical orientation towards Orientalist thought has matured⁴.

This means that after the retreat of the Orientalist discourse based on Western hegemony and the presence of the self, and the emergence of the philosophy of difference, which granted the other a place in the ongoing interaction that does not settle in a single state, even if it appears calm and stagnant in its general form, identity has come to be practised as difference in the self and with the other. Then, the Eastern Muslim was not limited to criticising the views of the Orientalists, but prepared for the emergence of a reverse Orientalism, in which the Eastern

¹- Jacques Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, translated by Kazem Jihad, Dar Tobqal, Casablanca, 1st edition, p. 167.

²- Jacques Derrida, *Margins of Philosophy*, interviewed by Michel Verkora, in *Jacques Derrida and Others: Politics of Reconciliation, Tolerance and Memory*, translated by Hassan Al-Omran, Dar Tobqal Publishers, Casablanca, Morocco, p. 12.

³- Magdy Abdel Hafiz, *The Position of Reason in Postmodern Philosophies*, Thought World, Volume 41, National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters, 2012, p. 156.

⁴- Muta’ Al-Safadi, *Critique of Western Reason*, cited above, p. 330.

thinker studies the West as the “other” and the “self” in the mirror of the West, so that authenticity was for the mentality of the Eastern individual and his priorities and mental assumptions. In other words, the study also becomes a kind of alienation, as a reaction to the authoritarian approach of modern Orientalism.

Difference as an act, founded outside the logic of binaries, of Aristotelian logic, and even outside dialectical logic, is the distancing from any authoritarian, nationalist, or ethno-religious subjective tendency that believes in the notion of the chosen people or the supreme mob, but rather a call that does not deny the other’s right to exist, nor marginalizes it, but rather accepts it to live together. Neither does it marginalise it, but rather accepts it in order to live together.

Conclusion:

Among the things that can be deduced from this research paper regarding the concept of Orientalism as a dialectical nature between the Western self-centredness as a dominant authoritative phenomenon and the Other - existing in the orbit of the Western self as a pathological phenomenon in need of treatment and healing, the following can be stated:

There is no agreement on the concept of Orientalism, as it is the product of a living experience of conflict and dialectic between two civilisations, cultures and faiths, where the Western self has been represented as the Orientalist with multiple roles and connotations. It has ascribed them to the Other by virtue of its centrality. For it is the Logos and the One, the Only Complete, the Absolute Certainty, and it is the Other - the sick, the deficient, the incapable.

Throughout the period in which the Western self has been dominant, Orientalism has been nothing but false claims, indicative of an inflated self that feeds on the politics of exclusion and denigration, and no one confronts its claims because there is no critical vision, because it is based on the foundations of modernity and modern science, to the extent that the concept of the East has become an artificial subject in the view of the Western self, and Orientalism a form of introspection.

The postmodern period is seen as a phase in which Orientalism entered a phase of critical reflection, based on the conceptual framework of postmodernism. This is exemplified by the works of “Edward Said” and several others who provided critical studies of Orientalism with different perspectives and approaches within the intellectual climate of postmodernism. It was during this period that the “other” found its own unique opportunity to present its heritage, its legacy and the hitherto unexamined aspects of its tradition in a radical and comprehensive manner.

Finally, to escape this predicament, the “Other” must subject its history to a comprehensive critical examination, breaking away from the binary of West and East in order to engage in a dialogue with itself before interacting with the Western “Other”, whose examination will later have a significant impact on the questioning of its own heritage.

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