

Orientalism on Cultural Dispute

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(Ideas by themselves do not make history, because social and economic forces have their effect. At the same time, ideas are not a passive result. They, primarily, make actions possible, then they may make them acceptable).

Todorov

Reference and Anti-Reference

The term "Orientalism" refers to further passive overlap and misunderstanding due to its inherent immediacy among cultural and epistemic contexts and the clear difference between them. If the most impressive feature depends on distinguishing the strength points in the relation between the two parties, its clearest endeavor, as it depends on control, dominance and permeation through knowledge, is to attempt imposing its influence that is power. As much as Orientalism is subject to attack, rejection and execration, the amount of slander in this term should be a guideline revealing the necessity to discern not the amount of knowledge it is based on as much as the significance of its intentions, purposes and goals. This is particularly so when we find that the contexts in which Orientalism is most active are often related to the amount of the political activity of the west (Occident) which did not hesitate to march to the east (Orient) in campaigns that found expression in the first western wave, that is the Crusades 1095-1291, the second wave, that is from 1507 till the end of World War II, while the third wave came in the wake of the cold war between the communist and capitalist rivals. This is together with the theorization by strategic experts drawing the nature and content of the relation between the west, being an epistemic, cultural and political system, and the Middle East in particular. This came as a result of the civilization conflict which grounds were laid by Huntington in his "Clash of Civilizations" derived from the theses of the conservative orientalist "Bernard Lewis".

Another Platitude

Between the traditional output of orientalist heritage, with the visions, perceptions and wagers it was based on, on the one hand, and the modified perspective of Neo-Orientalism that identifies with drawing the features and schemes of western politics, with the resulting knowledge, concepts and contexts, on the other hand, there is a clear evidence of the guidelines on which Orientalism was based as a field attempting to impose dominance, as it endeavors to achieve application and motivate the requirements to legitimize the resulting meaning embraced by the strong side of the equation.

What are the possible epistemic differences between, on the one hand, traditional Orientalism, which grounds were laid by the colonialistic institution, being a vanguard of imperialistic interests marching to the east with all its mysteries, enigmas, wealths, flying carpets and charming nights. Crusaders decided to export their internal problems to the east under the pretext of the holy pilgrimage and the road to the Lord. Rather, conflict of interests and seeking dominion were the utmost goals that the princes of the crusades had along three centuries. And, on the other hand, the travel of Marco Polo which he started in 1271 passing across Mosul, Baghdad, Khorasan, Pamir, Kashgar, down to the court of Kublai Khan in 1275. Kublai Khan did not hesitate to inquire about ((the western part of the world, the Roman emperor and other Christian kings and princes, how justice was upheld in their kingdoms, how they conducted at war, in addition to other inquiries about the pope, church affairs and the worships and doctrines of Christians)). (Travels of Marco Polo, pp. 35-36). Or still, the Portuguese conqueror who achieved victory in Andalusia, discovered the new world in 1492, and passed the Cape of Good Hope in 1498 on the way to India with his warriors, missionaries and merchants.

Glorification of Conflict

In the conflict that refers to all the activities of mental construction, as the visions and conceptions the west has obtained line up for the benefit of objective and epistemic matters, there remains the problem of Orientalism effectiveness that sustains on violation, omission, alteration and forceful meaning, in other words on the possession of the mind and its scientific facts. The features of classical orientalist can be seen in this strict formation that tends to define the range, goal and purpose. This often targets Islam that has always been unified and steadfast in the face of the west, while the west suffered from divisions and conflicts. This made "Hisham Juait" refer to (1) the solidarity of Orientalism, both religious and secular, in directing its criticism to Islam on

the basis of the consequences of cultural continuation and incomplete emulations based on misunderstanding and interwoven meanings.

Obviously, the methodology of Orientalism moves outwards. Therefore, applications always suffer from subjective awareness, prejudgments, axioms and postulates imposed by the ready-made model. This is because the orientalist recalls a state of covert confrontation that he evokes from his own model so that he may project it on the other model under study. This may, in the end of the day, give the impression that there is a conflict between the smart, reasonable, studying, explaining and describing west on the one hand, and the static recipient east. Western researchers often find themselves oriented due to the particularities and contexts they harbour. Therefore, the west will be present in all the details raised by the orientalist, with all his mental immunity, methodological deliberations and epistemic derivations. This can easily be coupled with entering in the labyrinth of arbitrary comparisons between a civilized west and an uncivilized east, between a humanitarian and a savage, and between a developed and an underdeveloped. The description would then dominate(2) all the activities that follow objectivity, and seriously and strictly seek such objectivity, while subjective and private ideas would remain. On the other hand, subjective consciousness and identity dialectics would be the defensive mechanism against the spiritual and cultural game evoked for certain teleology which may only result in misunderstanding, slander, wider spaces or longer distances.

In the Midst of Division

The phenomenon of Orientalism is an old concern in Arabic and Islamic mentality. The presence of this concern can be discerned in the fact that its discourse comes from the west whose image is always coupled with conspiracy, dominance, hegemony and everything related to apprehension, caution and even fear. Perhaps the already existing division in defining the other's positions is the most prominent theme in defining the nature of the conflictual relationship in the dialectic of "the self and the other". Inasmuch as the western school is highly capable seeking to observe various phenomena by operating in mental and intellectual fields, one finds that aversion, presuppositions and suspicion have always been the main positions in the attitude to the phenomenon of Orientalism. This fact made the residues dissipate the supposed points of strength and activation in the epistemic environment they provide. So, emphasis has to be laid here, "without any fear of the limitations of being dominated", on the significance of "outstripping". one has to deliberate on the state of "outstripping" that may lead to activating serious dialogue and dispassionate search in the epistemic contents of the discourse where mental components lie.

However, one cannot overlook the contrast between two epistemic components, as imposed by facts. The first is embodied by western orientalist discourse with all its mental contents and trends. The other gets shape from the data provided by Arabism and Islam with all their latent whereases and intellectual requirements. If the guidelines of the east and the west have, in many historical instances, been subject to direct confrontation and military conflicts, their continuance is subject to the nature of mental discourse emanating from both parties. This discourse may even be considered as the most important guideline in defining the state of agitation and calmness in the existing contrast. Without leaning on subjective data, one has to acknowledge that initiation in reading and examination normally emanates from the west. This is why the phenomenon has been called "Orientalism", as examination and deliberation comes from a certain party, that is the west, which managed to grasp the moment of achievement through the tools and means it possesses. The epistemic and methodological capabilities the west had obtained contributed in crystallizing its civilization shift from the darkness that prevailed all the west in the middle ages to spaces of openness through the ages of renaissance, enlightenment and modernism. Throughout, the west has been relying on major epistemic revolutions that were reflected in the depth of the social, political(3), religious and economic structures. Then it manifested itself in the revolution of scientific inventions concentrated in the British Isles, the geographical explorations to which Spain and Portugal contributed, the movement of religious protest, "Protestant", at the hands of "Martin Luther" in Germany, the philosophical enlightenment movement, and the effects and consequences of the French revolution. The west managed, through those perceptions, to define the outlines of a prominent mental and intellectual methodology founded on clear-cut scientific treatments. However, this foundation was not without instances of central superiority, view of inferiority and underdevelopment towards the other, and even identification with the desire for dominance and hegemony in many occasions and instances.

On the opposite side, the Arabs – Muslims were floating in the orbit of traditional categories based on passion and enthusiasm, and were reiterating the past and old glories. Many refused reading orientalist texts, labeling them with blasphemy, atheism and abnormality. Hence came the ready-made conception of orientalist

achievement, with the general view of Orientalism as "another" epistemic context aiming at wresting the concept of originality and demolishing the internal content of the epistemic pattern(4) in the Arabic – Islamic cultural structure and mental formations.

The authority from which Orientalism derives its methodological content lies within contexts, wagers, meanings and desires of one nature. However, this description does not represent Orientalism in general. Careful and precise reading reveals a lot of contrasts in the mechanisms of operating orientalists, each according to his own views, conceptions and theoretical bases. Although the purpose is one and the same, the means and methods are varied and multiple, motivated by the high intellectual dynamics where the mind lived within the western framework, together with the epistemic achievements of intellectuals and philosophers within the epistemic structure. The history of western thought was even an epistemic mosaic revealing many perceptions and ideas ranging from materialistic to logical, historical, modernist and post-modernist. It went deep into the contents of decentralization, divergence, structuralism and deconstruction. In fact, this methodological diversity of the west is an essential content in defining the attitude towards Orientalism(5). Perhaps the depth of the problem can be manifested in elucidating the relations and bonds that form the basis of western methodologies. It is not a matter of fascination with modern methodologies, embracing them, giving them the absolute essence, and considering them the objective carriers of the one truth, inasmuch as it is significant to go deep into them in order to reach an objective crystallization of their methodological assumptions and the nature of their attitudes by studying the epistemic carrier they deal with. For instance, structuralism stops at very stable and static structures in the field it explores by embracing the closed category about the Arabic-Islamic mind, in case this was considered a counterpart to underdevelopment. On the other hand, the socio-historical methodology is much more open, as it objectively deals with the change occurring to phenomena. In case the phenomena related to underdevelopment disappeared, there would be an openness to change, and there would consequently be transformation in meanings, till the optimal state is achieved, where there will be connection with historical, social and economic circumstances.

A number of factors contributed to the manifestation and concentration of orientalist conceptions in the Arab – Islamic field. This is because the initiative always comes from the "victorious" whose powers and capabilities enable him to enhance his views and conceptions. However, the intellectual content that prevailed in the west in the 19th century had an effect in deepening the differences and establishing the ethnic factors as a basis for the attitude towards the other. In spite of all the transformations that occurred to the west, which had a direct effect in shaking previous mental and intellectual foundations, western superiority remained in the objective reality. This superiority was enhanced by the earnest and continual endeavours by the other to embrace all the methodologies, ideas and concepts produced by the west. This may go to the farthest limit when the west is considered as the only carrier of scientific truth, on the basis of being pioneering and having the priority in this field. Without putting all the disadvantages on this phenomenon, it is necessary to consider the issue of methodological applications. Due to historical, social and political transformations, the west managed to enhance the spread of its subjective discourse within the other's epistemic system. Even the other's principle of subjective standardization mostly cared about getting more and more from this west. Perhaps the reality of Arab universities reveal the new conditions they set in providing work opportunities to holders of high qualifications, as the first(6) condition is the necessity of obtaining a degree from an acknowledged western university. Yet, it does not stop here. Many Arab academics, who defend the originality of Arab civilization and warn against the danger of western methodologies, tend to boast before their colleagues that they are graduates of the Sorbonne, Oxford and Harvard., saying that equivalence with graduates of other universities is unjust!

The value of scientific methodologies is manifest in demolishing the contents of previous conceptions and motivating the mind to be opened with a new vision based on the subject dynamics. While Arab cultural circles consider transformations in meanings as a disadvantage, the west, in building its epistemic perceptions, demolished the foundations of intellectual certainties and moved into renewed spaces of analysis, theorization, epistemic exploration, deconstruction and ceaseless methodological revolutions. This process included all sciences and fields of knowledge, and even laid the bases for new concepts. And through all this the features of change appeared in the content of western discourse. Progress was no more subject to compliance with the lines of western experience. It rather became subject to connection with the factors of social element and political transformations as proposed by the hypotheses and contexts of "socio-historical" methodology. Here, there is deep relation with the element of social initiative with all its underlying factors defining the outlines of "identity", there is also the social effect on dealing with meanings in their contexts and wagers, and

there is the ability to analyze relations by interpretation in order to reach a more accurate understanding of the particularity of the phenomenon.

The 19th and 20th centuries witnessed keen endeavours by the Arabs and Muslims to avail of the western experience. This was manifested in the Ottoman reformation movement. Sultan Mahmood II issued the Charitable Reformation of 1839, "Khatti Shareef Kolkhana", that revealed western intentions in the religious beliefs. The reformation decree referred to securing the liberties of minorities within the borders of the sultanate, which sparked a series of interventions in the private affairs of the Ottoman Empire. Then there was the "Khatti Shareef Hamayon", issued in 1856, which made this empire a fertile ground for western capitalistic interests. In fact, westernization started from the early beginnings of the 18th century when Sultan Ahmed III tended to imitate the European model in modernizing the government institution. If we put the factor of social element aside and look at the factor of political transformations, we will find that "competition" goes to its farthest extent in the context of the appearance of political action and direction of meanings. This is because internal conviction is one thing, reality is something else. Sultan Abdulhameed II well expressed this fact when he said: "Islam is not against development and advance. It rather rejects the development based on foreign principles. The principles of our development must come from ourselves and from our reality". Hence,(7) we can discern the depth of the crisis preoccupying the highest authority in the Islamic World, that is Sultan Abdulhameed, when the perceptions of social and historical identity come in contrast to responding to the perceptions of transformation, being deeply related to the strategies and interests of the victorious party.

The social element was subject to direct transfer and quotation. So the Arab elite tended to avail of "modernization" in order to reform the confused conditions the Ottoman vilayets suffered from. However, "westernization" became an obsession, even with the enlightened people(8), because of the staticness of social relations and also because the reformation movement is related to the Ottoman centrality. At the same time, the west remained the greedy and mal-intentioned opponent and the natural heir of the crusade forces.

Similarly, the factor of "political transformations" came to the forefront in the socio-historical context of the relation between Islam and the west. That was when the secular "Committee of Union and Progress", "Ittihat ve Terakki Cemiyeti", embracing the goals(9) of the French Revolution "Liberty – Equality – Fraternity", led the "Ottoman Coup of 1908". It attempted to reactivate the constitution and declared its keen interest to purge the administrative and government institutions, throughout the sultanate, from corruption and flabbiness.

Overlap of Contexts and Wagers

The Arabic – Islamic elite found itself in the midst of divided and undefined aspirations. There was a tendency towards decentralization, as with Muhammad Ali Pasha in Egypt, Hammouda Pacha in Tunisia, the Deys in Algeria, Dawood Pasha in Iraq, and the Karamanli Dynasty in Libya. In fact, leadership was in the hands of non-Arabs, for the Mamluks were in charge, while the major burden was on the Arabs. However, this does not mean that we should overlook the particularity of modernization in Egypt, which was suppressed by a British – Ottoman coalition in 1840. This made later rulers embrace "westernization", which turned Egypt into a market for British goods and a wide field for the continuation of textile factories in England. Although there was resistance to and rejection of foreign colonialistic intervention by the national elite, such resistance and rejection were unclear due to considerations of the prevailing social reality. Therefore, rejection was just a knowledge lacking will and power(10). The dilemma of the Arab elite can be very well seen when the Arab nationalists sought assistance from the allies in World War I, and even declared the Arab Revolt against the Ottomans in 1916 with British support and blessing. Again we see political transformations excluding the factor of social element, resulting in small states due to the direct colonialistic control of the Arab Homeland.

The period between the two world wars was a kind of intellectual labour that played a major role in establishing the Arab awareness. It is related to the emergence of new social formations as in the role of the small bourgeoisie class, which harvested the educational revival, and the states' need of middle staff. This stage witnessed the atrophy of the activities of the old classes: merchants, craftsmen and clerics. At the same time, this "small bourgeoisie" had a strong tendency towards nationalism, as it found that its epistemic will should be based on the "requirement of Arab unity", while the authority's will contradicted with this tendency in actual reality. So, the conflict of wills continued to make the political discourse a tool of evasion on the part of the state, which did not hesitate to raise the slogan of Arab unity at the beginning of their political preambles. Meanwhile

the rising national bourgeoisie went too far in embracing ready-made ideological statements(10) of western background.

Strategies of western speech

The development stages of the western mind have given rise to a state of limitation versus patterning concerning others. This was not the result of an individual practice done by a single work team or party, but it is the formation of private practice developing inside the structure of the western cognizance. This is not directed to the east in particular, it is a combination of a lot of ambitions. As Dr. Abdullah Ibrahim (11) pointed out it is not necessarily that we westernize the issue but it is something required by the western mind.

The general course makes the west looking for containing all the subjects according to the cognitive legacy which are deep rooted in the historical activities and practices. That dates back to the Greeks who regarded civilization as their private invention describing the other nations as barbaric, characterized by backwardness and degeneration. Only through philosophy, which is the result of the cognitive practice, the west achieved its subsequent step in line with the religious materials in a rational way which led to a fairly balance in the natural world. From this stems the need of achieving accordance between the mind perception and religious obligations which in turn led to the creation of political, social and economic entities and their impact in the creation of social and cultural movements through legislative and legal means. Although this kind of activities have gained prominence in the western life during the twelve and thirteen centuries, it is attributed to the process of communication with the Islamic and Arabian east through various channels, the most important of them is Andalusia, and the crusades 1095-1291, expanded commercial communications in the Mediterranean, by which the Greek philosophic heritage was rediscovered through the efforts of Arab Muslims who undertook the process of 'translating and constructing knowledge', consequently the features of enlightenment started to form in the west, accordingly, universities and schools were founded and the civil life was enhanced and activated via special care of philosophic, religious, religious and scientific studies that were conducted.

Amid the economic transformations that were witnessed by Europe where trade expanded, a suitable environment began to prevail for joining and interacting different directions, and activation of reviving the roman legislations with the new directions set by Christian clerics. Whereas the Aflaton factor was the most important philosophic pillar at that time that intensified rational activity between nature and supernatural phenomena. But this separation depended upon the harmonious relation between the spiritual and materialistic, through the idea of correlation.

The European west responded during the 12th century to Law of Cause and effect, according to Platoon's findings. Therefore new horizons of research were open wide to seek the causes in order to reach the cause of existence and defining within the natural or supernatural frame. From this point, the role of philosophers became evident to forecast the links, patterns and potentials of nature. This was the medium in which the western philosophers gave priority to 'intellect' for a more comprehensive approach towards universe, to the extent that many of them pointed out that the importance of the sacred book was to identify disciplinary conduct and identification (12) of duties. Whereas the duty of interpretation and thinking is limited to mind alone so that man, granted this, would be capable of adaptation and interaction within the natural surroundings. The clerics of religion limited the directions of scientific research, to the limit that a call was released to have a new mindset that would be capable of dealing with new interpretations of nature, the importance of depending modern methodologies, deepening the independency of scientific research from the impact of external authority or effect, submission is for intellect alone. All this said (12), the process of methodological thinking and investigation was the concrete basis for a new spirit in this world.

Gaston Bachelard, in the work of 'the formation of the scientific mind', indicates three stages that this mind was synthesized by: the pre- scientific stage that extended from ancient eras till 18th century, then from the late 18th century till the beginnings of the 20th century he describes the scientific stage, finally the new scientific statement released by Einstein 1905. But these stages are not considered final of course, for they were not isolated from internal and external effects. So Bachelard made benefit of material three-state law, set by Auguste Comte, where the first is the Theological stage, then the Metaphysical or Abstract stage and finally, the positive stage.

The west from creation to preservation

The west mind has abundantly benefitted from the philosophical springs, of different directions, trends and schools. But this never was a source of submission, but resulted in producing several scientific practices, that directly contributed in organizing approaches and methods, specifying their goals within a vast horizon, of renewable requirements. There was no 'dormancy' in a certain state of knowledge, the arena provided nonstop intellectual expectations. In this context, John Stewart Mill who died in 1873, exposed the nature of the

European history philosophy, and its continuous submission alternatively to the eras of "membership" and "analysis" that marked modernization. In reference to the religious unifying effect that groups people, the "membership" era was mentioned due to the prevalence of the Greek, Romans and Christianity, in the middle centuries, the era of enlightenment and the spirit of scientific innovation. But the manifestations of this era wouldn't have become evident if it weren't for the spread of the effects of the critical era that was in the direction of analyzing the factors(13), the third European era wouldn't have seen the light if it wasn't for the effects of several analytical eras. Those that were presented in the forms of: religious reform, geographic expeditions, legal reforms, scientific inventions and the French revolution. Through the interaction of both eras, Europe had the chance to be acquainted with its scientific and cognitive potentials that seemed pluralized and scattered. Creation is intensively active and moving vigorously and became a target of self recognition and divisions within the European body (14). Therefore science had recourse in new channels, but taking into account that science excelled theology and philosophy.

The most evident aspect was that manifested in political and historical mindsets, where there was a transformation from the all-inclusive to relativity, a direction towards particles. Division and dispute in thoughts appeared proportionately with variation and plurality of thoughts, pushing meditation aside, amid the liberal calls towards individuality, and its goals and different purposes. Plurality and division prevailed concerning the (look at the world, where theories (15) appeared in the fields of nationality, civilization and policy. By this the European west was subjected to its own ideas, depending upon the answers proved by its own experience, subsequently the *query* faded, in return for apparent and evident attendance of ready answers triggering the formation of conservative features of the western mind.

Cultural Dispute

What makes orientalism distinctive is the high dynamism in organizing the features of communicating with others specifically with the Islamic east because of the nature of the historical meeting between them. Many historians indicated that the orientalism activities started in the seventh century BC during the rise of Islam when the Muslims conquered the Byzantine forces at AlYarmouk battle as the convergence was not between the two forces only but it was in values of culture and civilization as well. That reached its climax in Andalusia where large number of European students headed there to study at the scientific schools. Arabic language became the vessel that carries all kind of scientific studies. This is way people were looking to learn that language to the extent that a group of priests translated, during the twelve century BC. the meanings of Holy Quran.(16)

The impact of orientalism was a clear indication of moving from the axis of West and East relations to the axis of operations where the interest was concentrated in forming the meaning by looking deep in the way things are categorized in a certain pattern and by creating values that are related to the internal meaning derived from oneself by focusing on the creation of certain pattern of speech in order to a certain meaning that can identify the subject. The search here is about the cultural and ideological directions in all of its forms. The subject of indication that orientalist were full minded of was related to western inner field where mechanisms are set to transform concepts from the absolute to the structural tangible dimension in order to reach the interpretation that is sought by a certain side through the factors of language and intellect and represented by speech directed according to its compass and bets that are restricted to a certain cultural group and in accordance with a set of basics that persist under its post. It represents a comprehensive speech that includes subjects, their distribution, sayings, concepts and contexts where their basic units are made of phrases.

It's the relation of transformation that we aim to achieve throughout the lesson of orientalism. We have two outcomes; the first is represented by separation by negative transformation. The other is related to affirmative transformation. Through moving along those processes the nature of relation between factors is identified, in a pursue to reach semantics and find the interpretation that relieve concern. It is important to point out here that contradiction is a natural aspect of negation and affirmation, in a continuous struggle to prove the perspective for each one of them. This is the exact point of difference that oriental researches face. In other words, some take the path leading to confirm the separation conduct and promote the aggressiveness towards the east, whereas others deal with the matter politely and objectively when addressing the east's identity, but in a quite restricted manner.

Structural factors of orientalist Discourse

Concerning desire, relations seem to be so close, between the two factors of self and subject, where self or "orientalism" advocates a certain direction of negation or affirmation, through strengthening its relation with the issue of the eastern identity, to ensure its viability and presence. This is applicable also in terms of

subjects that cannot be addressed far from linking this self, here it is important to be aware of that an initiative and source of action is related with the action of this self that grants the relation a state of comprehension towards those concepts that find their antonyms via the process of transformation, the relation between advanced or developed and backwardness, reflects the cases of transformation between negation and affirmation. Civilization is a better image compared with backwardness, and considering the capacity of distributing relations, the element of motivation lies beneath this self regarding the aim it embraces.

Concerning the process of informing, there is a relation between the sender "the west" and the receiver "the east" through the self linkage, orientalism which represents the motivation of the action, and the issue of the identity of the east is the goal or objective. by this formulated relation, the west presents the subject of the eastern identity, where it is adopted by orientalism for research and investigation. This is not considered a final opinion, for a unipolar reference shouldn't be trusted, and favored upon the other side. This of course in addition in taking into account that each aspect of the issue has its contradictive points and in addition that the elements of the subject are of cultural relation(17), that are interlaced in values and information. By this the west is the measuring point of that the patterns of transformation are compared and not a source of values and concepts.

In the area of struggle we find the aider "secularism" and the obstacle "Islam", if secularism is the result of a fruitful relation with the west, we find that Islam with its civilized and cultural aspects, faces the core of orientalism, with a potential for struggle, pointing out that it's never been remote from inner interaction. In many cases the obstacle is self lagging, when there is a misunderstanding of the Islamic values, and this formed the portal of entry for orientalism whereby it reached the eastern scientific system to justify its speeches by intensive attendance, and taking the stage for forming its propaganda and practice.

Footnotes:

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