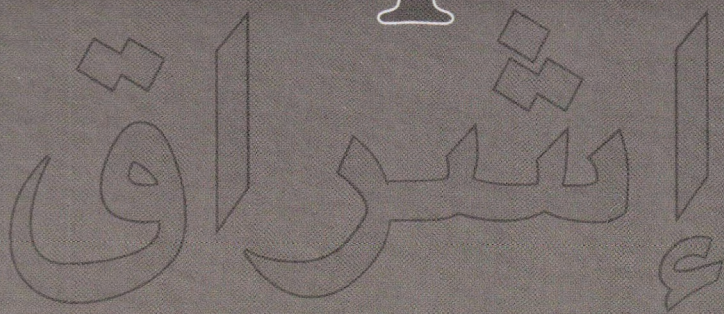


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I

ДИАЛОГ ФИЛОСОФИЙ

*

DIALOGUE OF PHILOSOPHIES

Hassan Hanafi (*Cairo University, Egypt*)

FROM ORIENTALISM TO OCCIDENTALISM

Orientalism as a field of research emerged in the West in modern times, since the Renaissance. It appeared during the second cycle of the history of the West, after the classical period and the Patristics, the medieval time and the Scholastics. It reached its peak in the 19th century, and paralleled the development of other Western schools of thought such as rationalism, historicism, and structuralism.

Orientalism has been the victim of historicism from its formation, via meticulous and microscopic analysis, indifferent to meaning and significance. Orientalism expresses the searching subject more than it describes the object of research. It reveals Western mentality more than it intuits Oriental Soul. It is motivated by the anguish of gathering the maximum of useful information about countries, peoples and cultures of the Orient. The West, in its expansion outside its geographic borders, tried to understand better in order to dominate better. Knowledge is power. Classical Orientalism belongs for the most part to similar aspects of colonial culture in the West such as Imperialism, Racism, Nazism, Fascism, a package of hegemonic Ideologies and European Supremacy. It is a Western activity, an expression of Western *Elan Vital*, determining the power relationship between the Self and the Other; between the West and the Non West; between Europe from one side and Asia, Africa and Latin America, from the other side; between the New World and the classical world; between modern times and ancient times.

This brutal judgement, without nuances, is undoubtedly a severe and painful one, but a real one on the level of historical unconsciousness of peoples, on the level of images even if it is inaccurate enough on the level of concepts. On the contrary, Occidentalism is a discipline constituted in Third World countries in order to complete the process of decolonization. Military, economic and political decolonization would be incomplete without scientific and cultural decolonization. Insofar as colonized countries before or after liberation are objects of study, decolonization will be incomplete. Decolonization will not be completed until the

liberation of the object to become subject and the transformation of the observed to an observer. The object of study in Orientalism becomes the studying subject in Occidentalism, and the studying subject in Orientalism becomes an object of study in Occidentalism. There is no eternal studying subject and no eternal object of study. It depends on the power relationship between peoples and cultures. Roles change throughout history. Peoples in the Ancient World, China, India, Persia, Babylonia, Egypt, were studying subjects. Peoples and Islamic classical cultures were previously studying subjects and Europeans at the time were objects of study. The role changed in modern times when Europeans became the studying subjects and the Muslim world became an object of study. The end of Orientalism and the beginning of Occidentalism means exchanging roles for a third time in the subject object relationship between the Self and the Other. The West ceases to be subject and becomes object, and the Orient ceases to be object and becomes subject. Subjective Idealism switches from Western colonial modern times to Third World post-colonial new times. *Cogito, ergo sum*, which declared the West as a knowing subject, becomes in the third world *studio, ergo sum*.

Occidentalism is a counter-field of research, which can be developed in the Orient in order to study the West from a non-Western World point of view. The Other in the self is always an image. An image is always a caricature, which helps in shooting at the target. Orientalism drew many images for the Orient. These included Blacks, Yellows, Oriental Despotism, primitive mentality, savage thought, Semite mind, Arab mind, Violence, fanaticism, underdevelopment, dependence, sectarianism, traditionalism and conservatism. Once the Other is caricatured, it is easy to deal with him, justifying any action of the Self. The image made the Other a target the Self shoots at. Besides, the Self promotes self-made image to sharpen itself, such as: whites, Western, democracy, logical mentality, civilization, Aryanism, peace, tolerance, development and even over-development, independence, secularism, modernism, progress. By the power of mass media and its control by the West, the perpetuation and the repetition of this double image was made by the self to disarm the Other and to arm the Self, to create a permanent relation of superiority-inferiority complex between the Occident and the Orient, and a relationship of inferiority-superiority complex between the Orient and the Occident.

If Orientalism was the creation of the center, Occidentalism is the creation of the periphery. The center was also privileged in history of sciences, arts and cultures, while the periphery, was marginalized. The center creates and the periphery consumes, the center sees and conceptualises. The center is the master and in the periphery lies the disciple. The center is the trainer and the periphery is the trainee. Occidentalism, as a new science, can exchange this type of relationship, with the fixed roles played by the two, for reverse relationships and roles.

Orientalism is born in an ethno-racist culture. It expresses Euro-centrism, based on historical pride and organic superiority. This pits White against Black, knowledge against ignorance, logic against contradiction, reason against magic, rationalization against ethico-religious practice, dignity and human rights against digni-

ty and rights of God or of the king, democracy versus despotism or in short, Life against death, Being against nothingness. Occidentalism corrects this type of relationship between the West as Self and the Orient as Other to the Orient as self and the West as Other. The relation between the self and the Other, either way, can be an equal relation, not a high-low relation, an even and sane inter-subjective relation instead of a superiority-inferiority complex. Constructive Occidentalism is the substitute for destructive Orientalism.

The history of the world was written as if the West was the very center of the Universe and the end of history. History of ancient civilizations was reduced to the minimum. History of modern times in the West is blown up to the maximum. Three thousand years of the Orient are summarized in one chapter, while five hundred years of history of the modern West is expounded in several chapters. Orientalism was the victim of Western philosophies of history, which conceived Europe as the peak of all civilizations, the fruits in modern times after planting the seeds in ancient times, the accomplishment of a theological development, the perfection of things after the abrogation of all previous imperfections, the unique Christ after the prophets of Israel, repeated in history. Occidentalism aims at evening the balance of world historiography against this historical injustice in history of world civilization.

Neutrality and objectivity were claimed to be the conditions of Western science. However, Orientalism is neither neutral nor objective. It is an oriented and committed discipline, expressing the inclinations and the profound motivation in European consciousness. It reveals the passions of the subject, more than it describes the neutral object. It substitutes for the independent object the mental image of the subject. Neutrality and Objectivity appear to be a cover-up for partiality and subjectivism. Occidentalism is just the opposite. It is not motivated by rancor or the desire to dominate. It does not consciously or unconsciously deform the object by stereotyped images, or make value-judgements on it. It tries to be a vigorous science by its object, method and purpose. The desire to liberate one's self from the yoke of the image imposed on him by the Other is a creative power, unveiling the truth of power relationships between the subject and the object in Orientalism, controlling the Other by the image, or in Occidentalism, liberating one's self from the image imposed on him by the other. Occidentalism may produce counter-images for the Other, with its desire to dominate, and for the self, with a self-producing image of endogenous creativity, as a desire for self-liberation.

The objective of Occidentalism is to counterbalance Westernization tendencies in the Third World. The West became a model of modernization outside itself, in Africa, Asia and Latin America. Western life-style became very common in non-Western countries, especially in the ruling classes. The imitation of the West became almost a national behaviour. These Westernization tendencies have generated anti-Western attitudes as they appear in religious conservatism and fundamentalism. Occidentalism is partly a defence of national character, national culture and national life-style against alienation and disloyalty; a popular option against Orientalism

as a minority option; a mass culture against Orientalism as an elite culture; an ideology for the ruled against Orientalism as an ideology of the ruler; a liberating device like liberation theology against Orientalism as a dominating device, like church dogmatics.

National culture everywhere in the Third World is split between two antagonistic tendencies. Each is presenting itself as the true representative of the people, the first in the name of modernity, the second in the name of Tradition. In the case of the Arab World, the West is a model of modernization in the three major trends in modern Arabic Thought: Religious Reform founded by Al-Afghani, Secular Scientism initiated by Shebly Shmayyel, and political Liberalism conceived by Al-Tahtawi. In these three trends, the West is a model of knowledge, that is of power, industry, urbanism, democracy, multi-party system, constitution, freedom of press, human rights. This is the image of Europe during the enlightenment. The difference between the three trends is of degree, not of nature. Once national passion calms down, Westernization appears as loyalty to the West and a life style for the ruling class. Cultural dependence on the West generates a gradual loss of national independence. Occidentalism as a science gives the priority to the endogenous over the exogenous, to the interior over the exterior, to the Self over the Other, to antinomy over heteronomy.

Occidentalism as a cultural movement aims at transforming developing societies from transfer of knowledge to cultural creativity. Since the National liberation era, the construction of the Nation State is based on modern sciences coming from the West. The role of intellectuals and even of scientists was to transfer science, art, and literature from the Western to the non-Western World. The West produces and the non-Western World consumes. The West creates and the non-Western World transmits. National cultures became conveyers of foreign systems and ideologies. The Culture of the center radiates on the peripheries. The center profuses and the peripheries diffuse. Occidentalism can help the Third World in sharing the creation, not just the diffusion, of a common cultural homeland for all humanity. Science emerges from reality, not from pre-formulated texts in the ancient tradition or in the modern West. Conceptualisation is not the monopoly of European consciousness. It is a human effort, accessible to every human consciousness. The long and painful work of creativity is preferable to the laziness of consumption and imitation, to the transfer to one's self the concepts formulated elsewhere. Peoples in the Third World can then reach the age of maturity and get rid of Western cultural tutorship.

The scientific data of this new science, Occidentalism, can be drawn from two sources: first, the criticism of European culture by Third World intellectuals, based on simple intuitions and existential reactions or on scientific analysis and demonstrative arguments. Before and after national liberation, national intellectuals in Africa, Asia and Latin America tried to liberate their national cultures from the hegemony and supremacy of Western culture. The critic of the Other and the perception of his limits is the pre-requisite of self-liberation from the control of the Other.

The mentality, the history and the culture of the Other are distinct from the soul, the history and the culture of the Self. Indigenismo, Liberation Theology in Latin America, Conscientism and Negritude in Africa, base and democratic movements in Asia. All are examples of national creativity.

The second source of critique of European Consciousness is made inside the West by the Europeans themselves, their thinkers and philosophers. Rousseau criticizes arts, sciences, literature and their negative influence on individual and social ethics. Spengler declares the "Decline of the West." Max Scheler speaks of the reversal of values. Nietzsche evokes general nihilism and announces the death of God. Husserl and Bergson deplore the loss of life, "Erlebnis," "vecu" in European Consciousness, which became bankrupt for Husserl, and machines creating gods for Bergson. Nietzsche declares "God is dead," Derrida and the post-modernists declare "Man is dead," and Barthes even declares "The Author is dead!"

This double testimony, external and internal, constitutes the already-existing data of Occidentalism as science.

Besides, there is also primary data, the works produced by European consciousness itself as symptoms of European *Lebenswelt*, the barometer of Being and Nothingness, of life and death of cultures and civilizations. This raw material consists of major Philosophical Works during the historical course of European consciousness. Philosophy is a whole Worldview including art and science. It is the mirror, which reflects the development and the structure of European Consciousness. The object of Occidentalism is European Consciousness itself, as the soul of Europe, the condition of its renaissance or decline, life and death. The concept is not an abstraction, a hypothesis or a moral one but it refers to "une prise de conscience," *Besinnung*. a self consciousness, a subjectivity, the basis of objectivity studied by most philosophers of history: Scheler, Spengler, Bergson, Husserl, Ortega, Toynbee, Hazard. European consciousness has its sources, its beginning and end. It has a structure coming out of its development. Its future is debated at this turning point from the 20th to the 21st century.

European Consciousness has three sources: Greco-Roman, Judeo-Christian and the European milieu itself: mentality, temperament, popular culture, customs, traditions. The Roman source took over the Greek one, given the Romanist intensive of Imperial Rome, which was reiterated in modern European colonialism. The Jewish source took over the Christian one, with Paul and the Judaization of Christianity. The European milieu, which was closer to Romanism and Judaism than to Hellenism and Christianity, took over two other sources. Realism triumphed over Idealism. Materialism dominated over Spiritualism and Satan overwhelmed God. The first two sources, Judeo-Christian and Greco-Roman, changed models from Plato during the Patristic period to Aristotle during Scholasticism; from Idealism to Realism; from mind to matter. The European milieu is the material substratum for Judaism, Romanism and Aristotelianism. Thus the carrier and the carried are of the same kind.

European consciousness began in modern times, with the Cartesian Cogito, "Cogito, ergo Sum." The subject has an absolute priority over the object. The World is a perceived world. Subjective idealism was the point of departure. Regarding ethics, temporary ethics were proposed, unsubjected to reason. The will is much wider than reason. Theoretical Truth is guaranteed by Divine veracity. From this subjectivism, two apparent opposite trends emerged: Rationalism and Empiricism. Both are subjectivist, the first as an idea, a priori or deduction; the second as impression, sensation, a posteriori and induction. The first trend begins from the subject upwards, while the second begins from the subject downwards. European consciousness became like an open mouth. This is the famous Western Dualism which European modern philosophy began with and suffered from. The Transcendental Idealism of Kant tried to unify the two trends as form and matter, category and intuition, a priori and a posteriori, induction and deduction, analysis and synthesis, metaphysics and physics, philosophy and science. In this famous problematique: how an a priori synthetic judgment is possible? Organic unity and dialectic movement were absent. The same dualism continued in ethics. Pure reason is incapable of knowing right and wrong. Only practical reason can. Pure reason deals with phenomena, while practical reason deals with noumena. Kant declares that through this dualism, determining the final purpose of Transcendental Idealism and critical philosophy, he had to destroy knowledge in order to make room for belief. Later, when efforts were again made through the absolute Idealism of post-Kantians, to unify this juxtaposed dualism, it only became triadism, sensation, understanding, and reason; aesthetics, analytics and dialectics, in a dialectical process. Fichte conceived practical Idealism and the subjective dialectic between the Ego and the non-Ego to form the Absolute Ego. Hegel reiterated Fichte, transforming subjective dialectics to objective, and going from logic to Being. Schelling preferred a certain kind of philosophy of Identity between *Geist* and *Natur*, to begin with unity as an axiom, not Cartesian duality. Schopenhauer reiterated the same dualism in the World as Representation and Will, trying to unify the two in the negative aspect of life. This was already a symptom of the end, in accord with Rousseau's critique of modern civilization. The criticism of the Hegelian left, regarding Hegelian absolute Idealism, is also the beginning of the end. In all efforts to close down the open mouth of European consciousness, the end appeared in three ways: first, with Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Ortega and most existentialists, the critique of Western rationalism became abstraction and formalism, ending in a complete destruction of reason and the affirmation of the irrational, the absurd and the contradictory, in order to bring the upward ascendant line downwards. Second, with Scheler, Weber and all existentialist philosophers, the critique of Empiricism as materialism and naive objectivism, brought the downward descendant line upwards. The two lines meet in the middle in the new Cogito of Husserl and Bergson, in human existence according to all existentialist philosophers, and in life with all philosophers of life, thus putting the third way between the two opposing trends and thereby clos-

ing up the European mouth. The course of European consciousness has its beginnings and endings. It has a point of departure and a point of arrival, from the Cogito of Descartes to the Cogitatum of Husserl. The epopee ends.

Besides, European consciousness has a structure formed during its development. It has a Trinitarian structure, expressing itself in a triadic vision which splits the phenomenon into three parts and reduces the whole to one of its parts. The question is whether the phenomenon is formal and can be understood by reason, or material and can be perceived through senses, or lived and can be felt through human experience. The three visions disputed among each other in order to have the monopoly of knowledge. Each vision became unilateral, one-sided and unilinear. European consciousness fell down into the dichotomy of either/or. European consciousness was not satisfied with the two alternatives and ended by neither/nor. The oscillation between all became the only truth. Change took over permanence. European consciousness lost its focus. It shoots outside the point, in all directions except in the center. It goes all the time off to the side in diversion. All alternatives became equally true and untrue, which led to total scepticism, at the very basis of contemporary Nihilism.

The question now is what is the future of European consciousness? Has it accomplished its historical course in the cycle of World-History? Which world-consciousness will take the lead? If Europe in modern times has inherited historical Cultures of Africa, Asia and Latin America, can Third-World consciousness, the new consciousness energized by the upsurge of these historical societies, take the lead and inherit European consciousness in a new cycle of World-history? Evidence can prove such a historical possibility, given the symptoms of new existence and optimism in Third World consciousness. Most philosophers of history in the West declared the birth of world history in the East and its rebirth and decline in the West. History was accomplished and the final stage was reached in modern times in the German enlightenment (Herder, Lessing, Kant, Hegel), in the French enlightenment (Voltaire, Montesquieu, Turgot), in the Italian enlightenment (Vico), in the Russian enlightenment (The Slavophiles), or in the American Enlightenment (Thomas Paine). Only Condorcet left one stage, the tenth, for the future. Rousseau had already declared the beginning of the end, while Hegel declared the accomplishment of history and the close of an European historical cycle. Contemporary European philosophers showed the different manifestations of Nihilism at the final stage of the development of European consciousness, integral Nihilism, the death of God (Nietzsche), *renversement des Valeurs* (M. Scheler), *Lebeweltverlust* (Husserl), *Des machines pour créer des Dieux* (Bergson), the decline of the West (Spengler), civilization on trial (Toyenbee), *l'Occident n'est pas un accident* (Garaudy), *la crise de la conscience European* (Hazard). The same phenomenon appears in human and social sciences, launching the question of crisis in Western sociology. It appears also in the general malaise of daily life, the counter-culture, two World Wars in thirty years, the collapse of the Western project, maximum of production. for maximum of consumption for maximum of hap-

piness, the high rate of suicide, organized crime, violence. The last hopeful signs of returning back to European classical Liberalism in Germany, Eastern Europe and Russia, the renewal of the capitalist system, the rejuvenation of socialism all are temporary and ephemeral signs. On the contrary, other real hopeful signs began to appear in Third World consciousness: liberation movements, decolonization, development, mass mobilization, modernization, building-up modern State, endogenous creativity, a new world value-system expressing a new world ethical social and political order in international agencies, a new World consensus against apartheid in South-Africa and Zionism, a new decolonization regime in Palestine. Set-backs are temporary counter-revolutions, dictatorships, militarism, new classes. Westernization, dependence, underdevelopment, violation of human rights. Moral and material Potentialities in the Third World. Experiences of trial and error are fruitful. Historical traditional experiences of the self from the past and modern European experiences of the other in the present time can be two signposts for a New World consciousness.

Does Occidentalism as a new science sacrifice the unity of world universal culture in favour of national particular culture? In fact, World Culture is a myth created by the Culture of the Center to dominate the periphery in the name of acculturation. It has been created thanks to the mass-media monopolized by the center. There is no One Culture in capital C. There are only multiple cultures, in small cs. Each culture has its own autonomous life, an expression of a people and its history. Cultural interaction throughout history does not mean acculturation, the absorption of small cultures in the periphery by the big Culture of the center, assimilation, imitation, or modelling. It means an equal exchange, a give and take, a two-way movement on the levels of language, concepts, horizons, methods, and values. Is Occidentalism a politicization of historical sciences? In fact, politicization of science is a common experience, shared among all peoples and cultures in all times. It appeared not only in classical Orientalism, but also in European Sciences, human, social and even natural. It is only when the balance of power changed from Europe to the Third World, from the center to the periphery, that politicization of science became an accusation. The master in the center was the champion of such endeavour. Science is Power. The passage from Orientalism to Occidentalism is in fact a shift in the balance of power.

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**‘THE WEST AND ISLAM?’:
RETHINKING ORIENTALISM AND OCCIDENTALISM¹**

“The West and Islam”, as a pair of conjoined terms, confront each other as a dichotomy of opposition, creating through their juxtaposition a question that is full of tension. This may be illustrated by the following announcement by a spokesman for the Catholic Church:

Msgr. Georg Gänswein, Pope Benedict XVI’s secretary and close adviser, warned of the Islamization of Europe and stressed the need for the Continent’s Christian roots not to be ignored. In comments released in advance of an interview to be published today in the German weekly *Süddeutsche Magazin*, he said: “Attempts to Islamize the West cannot be denied. The danger for the identity of Europe that is connected with it should not be ignored out of a wrongly understood respectfulness.” He also defended a speech Benedict gave last year linking Islam and violence, saying it was an attempt by the pope to “act against a certain naïveté.” (*New York Times*, July 27, 2007).

The sharp note of conflict in this statement is striking. Not only has the papal representative described Islam as a danger to Europe, but also he has claimed Europe, in effect, as the rightful property of the Christian Church because of its historical roots in the region. It is my contention that this type of civilizational and religious conflict is built into the concept of “the West,” particularly though not exclusively when it is put in opposition to Islam. This particular speech has been protested by Muslim leaders both in Europe and elsewhere as a provocation that encourages Islamophobia. Those who do not wish to support an endless series of colonial-style conflicts between Muslims, Christians, and others, need to find ways to reconceptualize the world without relying upon the notion of the timeless East and West. In other words, it is time to move beyond both Occidentalism and Orientalism.

As I have argued in more detail elsewhere², the concept of “the West” is to a certain extent fictive, in so far as it implies a unitary and homogeneous cultural identity that is vaguely ascribed to a number of countries in America and Europe and their would-be associates. Likewise, the notion of “the Islamic world” (inter-

¹ An earlier version of this paper was delivered as the 7th Tun Razak Lecture, 9 August 2007, at the University of Malaya in Kuala Lumpur.

² Ernst C. W. *Following Muhammad: Rethinking Islam in the Contemporary World*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003. Ch. 1.

changeable with Europe's Orient or "the East") can also be seriously misleading; it practically suggests that there is a separate planet that is somehow unconnected with Europe and America by political, economic, and military circumstances, and it glosses over as unimportant the many differences in history, ethnicity, language, and culture that characterize Muslim majority countries as well as the Muslim minorities elsewhere. From a historical point of view, the abstract notions of both "the West" and Islam leave out a great deal that is arguably significant. Both for Muslims and for European Christians, the historical roots of Abrahamic prophecy and Greek philosophy are a shared heritage, which neither can claim in an exclusive fashion. Muslims have been part of the fabric of European history for centuries, not only in al-Andalus but also in the Ottoman territories. And Muslims have also played a part in America over at least the past two centuries, as we must recognize if we note the existence of African Muslims, including scholars (like Omar ibn Sayyid) who were enslaved and sold in America. The dramatically increased Muslim populations of America and Europe are only the most recent examples of this phenomenon. Moreover, in addition to the long history of trade and contact between Europe and Asia through the ages, one cannot overlook the significance of the European expansion around the world since the time of Columbus, and particularly the high point of colonialism in the 19th century. The enormous economic and technical benefits that Europeans seized from their Oriental subjects, plus a fair amount of luck, undoubtedly played an enormous role in fashioning what we consider today the modern West, although there is an undeniable tendency for Europeans to claim superiority as result of their own intrinsic civilizational virtue. But recent historians have begun to question "the Eurocentric discourse" that "implies a kind of intellectual apartheid regime in which the superior West is quarantined off from the inferior East"³. The fact is that, both historically and in contemporary times, Muslims have played significant roles in relation to both America and Europe. In short, the opposition between "the West" and Islam is considerably overstated.

At the risk of sounding banal, I am forced to refer to a couple of well-known publications that have relentlessly and tendentiously hammered the theme of the opposition between the West and Islam. As anyone can predict, these are the writings of Samuel Huntington on *The Clash of Civilizations* and the fulminations of Bernard Lewis on "the roots of Muslim rage" along with his pontifications on *What went wrong?* with Islamic civilization. Both these books have been sharply criticized by professional historians for the shortcomings of their explanations and for the bias that characterizes their treatment of Islamic civilization in particular.⁴ Yet an amazing popularity was guaranteed for their publications by the way in which these books capitalized upon fears and prejudices that have a long his-

³ Hobson J. M. *The Eastern Origins of Western Civilization*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004. P. 283.

⁴ For a review of Lewis, see Cole J. *Global Dialogue*. 27 January 2003 (<http://www.juancole.com/essays/revlew.htm>); see also «What Is Wrong with What Went Wrong?» by Adam Sabra, in «Middle East Report Online» (http://www.merip.org/mero/interventions/sabra_interv.html).

tory in Europe and America. I would venture to say that Muslim readers around the world were shocked and horrified by the picture of Islam that was drawn by these supremely ideological writers. Yet it is striking that few of these readers have bothered to question the matching concepts that form the basis of the projects of Huntington and Lewis: i.e., the notion that there is something called “the West,” and that it can be clearly identified as a cultural unity. It is my feeling that implicit in the concept of “the West” is the colonial self image of a superior civilization that is destined to rule over the rest of the world, whether in overt political domination or through the more subtle forms of globalizing economies. As long as Muslims and non-Europeans in general continue to allow imperialist Europeans and Americans to set the terms of debate, in other words, as long as they accept that there is such a thing as the “the West,” they will have no way to win this argument; its outcome is implicit in the words themselves. As Mohammed Arkoun has observed regarding Bernard Lewis’s book *What Went Wrong*, “it will suffice to point out that both its title and its contents betray the intellectual impasse born of a frame of mind intent on thinking in terms of the polarity of an imaginary ‘Islam’ and its equally imaginary counterpart of the ‘West’. So long as this fictional dualism remains in place, the intellectual impasse which is thereby engendered is destined to remain irresolvable”⁵. So I am hoping to convince people to stop using the phrase “the West,” and to employ instead more specific identifiers that have a less ambiguous and less ideological implication — to speak in terms of particular regions and countries, such as America and France, for example⁶. In a similar fashion, I think it is important to abandon the phrase “the Muslim world” despite the idealistic concept of the Muslim *umma*. The conflictual implications of a unitary Muslim world in opposition to “the West” are simply too strong to avoid.

One can argue in this fashion against the dichotomy between “the West” and Islam on ethical grounds, but there are also important historical precedents in relatively recent times that question the current division. The Ottoman reformers of the *Tanzîmât* period in the early 19th century (1839) identified with the universalist principles of the Enlightenment, which they believed was or could be detached from Christian religious identity, and they were not troubled by European racism, since the Ottomans considered themselves to be Caucasians rather than Asians. They did not anticipate how fiercely Europeans would resist any consideration of equality for the “Asiatic races” or for Muslims. Cemil Aydin has analyzed at length the repercussions of the extraordinary impact of the speech by Ernst Renan on “Islam and science” delivered in Paris in 1883. Renan rejected the notion that Muslims could form part of modern civilization, both for racial and religious reasons. Semites (including both Jews and Arabs) were in

⁵ Arkoun M. *Islam: To Reform or to Subvert?* London: Saqi Essentials, 2006. P. 9—10.

⁶ It seems ironic that at least two geographical regions associated with Arabic culture are known as variations of «the West» in Arabic; I am thinking of Morocco (derived from al-maghrib), and the Portuguese region of the Algarve (from al-gharb), which was once an Arab-Andalusian dominion.

his view an inferior race incapable of the synthetic reasoning necessary for science and philosophy. The scientific achievements of premodern Islamic civilization, he argued, were due either to Iranians or to Arab Christians. This racist diatribe called forth refutations from leading Muslim intellectuals such as Jamal al-Din "al-Afghani" as well as other figures from Turkey⁷. The disappointment of the Ottomans who found themselves rejected as candidates for membership in Western civilization does not alter the fact that they initially considered themselves to be part of this formation.

In more recent times, the influential Egyptian writer Taha Husayn wrote in *The Future of Culture in Egypt* (1938) that Egypt had far more contact with Greece than with Persia or other eastern countries, so therefore Egyptian culture "should thus be regarded as Western or Mediterranean, rather than Eastern"⁸. This position was reflected in other Arab thinkers like the Egyptian-Lebanese writer and philosopher René Habachi, who identified the deepest traditions of Arabic thought with Mediterranean culture⁹. While these pronouncements in favor of a Western or Mediterranean identity for Egypt and Arabs might be contested, both in Europe and in the Middle East, nevertheless, as exceptions to stereotyped generalities they offer an important corrective. Since these counter-intuitive examples cannot be predicted or accounted for by essentialist notions of East and West, they point us towards locality and history as correctives to the distortions inherent in the binary model. I will accordingly give a number of specific examples from particular countries and time periods to demonstrate the problems in the East-West dichotomy.

The broader ideologies of Orientalism and Occidentalism certainly draw upon the basic concepts of East and West, since Orient and Occident are simply the Latin forms of these geographic markers. But their broader and more pervasive implications need to be drawn out analytically. The intellectual debate about Orientalism and its relation to colonial power is well known and has played out extensively in the past 30 years. Literary critic Edward Said in his 1979 essay *Orientalism* drew in broad strokes a portrait of European scholarship in the service of empire, based on the study of the languages and texts of Oriental peoples. Said pointed out the consistent way in which Orientalist scholarship reified and essentialized an imaginary and unchanging Orient as the polar opposite of Europe; where the West was scientific, rational, and powerful, the East was superstitious, tyrannical, and effeminate. Racial theory was deployed to demonstrate the superiority of Europeans over Asians and Africans. The results of this dichotomy were the projection of opposing essentialized identities onto Europe and

⁷ Aydin C. *The Politics of Anti-Westernism in Asia: Visions of World Order in Pan-Islamic and Pan-Asian Thought*. Columbia Studies in International and Global History Series. New York: Columbia University Press, 2007. Ch. 3.

⁸ Cited in Majid Fakhry, «The search for cultural identity in Islam: fundamentalism and Occidentalism», *Cultures* 4 (1977). P. 97—107, quoting page 103.

⁹ Fakhry. P. 105.

its Orient, generally identified with the area we now call the Middle East. "This identification with a unified Islamic essence also led to an enduring interpretation of the region through dichotomous notions of East and West"¹⁰. Subsequent commentators have pointed out the extent to which Said himself oversimplified and indeed essentialized Orientalism, as if it were itself an unchanging characteristic. He left out of his argument any serious discussion of Orientalism in countries such as Germany that did not have colonies in the Middle East or Asia. He also glossed over the presence of prominent Orientalist scholars who were vigorous opponents of imperialist policies, such as the British scholar of Persian literature, E. G. Browne, or the leading American Islamic studies specialist of the 20th century, Marshall Hodgson. While it is true that many Europeans believe that Orientals were naturally disposed toward despotism, there were critics of these positions even in the 18th century, such as Anquetil-Duperron, who pointed out the importance of legal systems in the East.¹¹ Postcolonial critiques have gone on to describe the history of the changing features of Orientalist scholarship in different regions and time periods, which have been characterized by differential ratios in the relationship between knowledge and power. Ashis Nandy has explored the psychological effects of the colonial mentality on the Europeans themselves, including the accentuation of aggression and hyper-masculine postures. Thus the entire project of Orientalism is not only vast and complex, but also extremely ambiguous; only a very superficial reading of Said would permit the conclusion that all Orientalist scholars have acted in bad faith in a sort of conspiracy¹². One cannot deny that some of the scholarly achievements of 19th-century Orientalist scholars, such as the dictionaries and grammars of Middle Eastern and Asian languages, are still indispensable tools for research today. And while some Orientalist scholarship (e.g., the work of Snouck Hurgronje for the Dutch in Indonesia) may have had a strong link to the support of colonial power, at the same time the colonial experience and its intellectual articulation is now an unavoidable and integral part of modern global history. In many cases we do not have access to much that is precious in non-European culture independently of the Orientalist scholarship that catalogued all that was Asian in its museum. Therefore, as Alijah Gordon has remarked in connection with the study of the Islamization of Southeast Asia, "to understand the dynamics of what is happening today, we must look to yesterday when the Western colonial powers — Portugal, Spain, the Netherlands and Great Britain — laid the framework for the splits we inherited. Our task is to recognize

¹⁰ Shami S. «Middle East and North Africa: Socio-Cultural Aspects», IESBS 14: 9793.

¹¹ Valensi L. *The birth of the despot: Venice and the Sublime Porte*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993; Anquetil-Duperron M. *Législation orientale: ouvrage dans lequel, en montrant quels sont en Turquie, en Perse et dans l'Indoustan, les principes fondamentaux du gouvernement*. Amsterdam: Chez Marc-Michel Rey, 1778.

¹² Fox R. G. «Orientalism», in N. J. Smelser and P. B. Baltes (eds.), «International Encyclopedia of the Social and Behavioral Sciences». Amsterdam: Elsevier, 2001; hereafter cited as IESBS, 16: 10976-8.

these fractured realities and to work towards a devolution of power where each of our peoples can live their lives in their own way.”¹³

A comparable level of ambiguity is also present in the concept of Occidentalism¹⁴. This can stand for on the one hand a triumphal sense of inevitable European hegemony, which has indeed been linked with Christianity during various phases of colonialism. In this sense, Occidentalism would be a belief in the superiority of the West. It should be acknowledged that over a century ago there were many Muslim intellectuals who implicitly accepted this postulate of European superiority, in the movements we call modernist. Thus the Persian liberal thinker Taqizadeh could speak positively and even enthusiastically of “surrender to Western civilization”¹⁵.

On the other hand, this symbolism of East and West can be easily inverted, so that Occidentalism can also be a critique of the West as negative in every sense. Iam Buruma and Avisahai Margalit have traced this type of negative Occidentalism to Japan in 1940s, after which it became fairly widespread throughout the Third World during the period of the Cold War¹⁶. In some formulations, the West is so essentialized that one can speak of “ethno-Occidentalism”, a kind of reverse racism that attributes unwavering qualities of negativity as almost a genetic identity for the West. A notable example is Egyptian thinker Hasan Hanafi, who has articulated his position in a book entitled *Introduction to the Science of Occidentalism (Muqaddima fī ‘ilm al-istighrāb)*. Hanafi begins from the assumption that Arabs need to make a critical study of Orientalism rather than using it as a factual source of self-knowledge. But from this promising critical beginning, he moves on to more ambitious attempts to rescue the Oriental self from its alienation by “reinforcing its own positive self image”. This is largely to be attempted by simply reversing negative Orientalist stereotypes and projecting the negativity onto the West, a proposal that has been severely criticized by other Arab thinkers who have accused him of racism. Hanafi’s ahistorical concept of Arab Islamic identity is remarkably similar to the approach of Samuel Huntington, as he “reduces the reading of both Islamic and Western awareness to religious and cultural perspectives”¹⁷. Hanafi’s project appears to be a sort of mirror image of Orientalism, and it is hard to see how he can avoid dehumanizing forms of alienation by adopting the methods of his opponent. Nevertheless,

¹³ Gordon A. Editor’s Note // *The Propagation of Islam in the Indonesian-Malay Archipelago*. Kuala Lumpur: Malaysian Sociological Research Institute, 2001. P. XVIII—XIX.

¹⁴ Coronil F. «Occidentalism», IESBS 16:10822-6.

¹⁵ Boroujerdi M. “The West in the Eyes of the Iranian Intellectuals of the Interwar Years (1919—1939)”, *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 26/3 (2006). P. 194 (this journal is here cited as CSSAAME).

¹⁶ Buruma I., Margalit A. *Occidentalism: The West in the Eyes of Its Enemies*. New York: Penguin Books, 2004.

¹⁷ Wahyudi Y. Arab Responses to Hasan Hanafi’s *Muqaddima fī ‘ilm al-istighrāb*, *Muslim World* 93. № 2 (2003). P. 233—248, quoting p. 236, 238.

it should be emphasized that Orientalism and Occidentalism do not exist on the same level. There is a hierarchical and asymmetrical power relation between the two. Occidentalists do not have colonies in Europe and America. "Thus while European Orientalism was the result of buoyancy of spirits, prowess and offensiveness, Islamist Occidental modes of discourse are the product of flagging spirits, weakness and defensiveness"¹⁸.

One of the most interesting aspects about negative Occidentalism is the extent to which it draws upon a long tradition of counter-Enlightenment critiques of "the West" by European thinkers. While these critics certainly existed in the 19th century (de Maistre, Herder, Nietzsche), some of the most important found their pessimistic expression at the time of the catastrophe of the first world war, particularly Oswald Spengler in his monumental *Decline of the West*. One of the most trenchant Occidentalists and anti-colonial manifestoes to emerge from Iran is of course the classic work of Jalal Al-e Ahmad (d. 1969), *Westoxication (Gharbzadegi)*. This book posed the dilemma of modern Iranian intellectuals as a choice between cultural authenticity or a rootless and alienated subservience to the West. Al-e Ahmad diagnosed Westoxication as "the aggregate of events in the life, culture, civilization and mode of thought of the people having no supporting tradition, no historical continuity, no gradient of transformation"¹⁹. Yet what is most striking about this formulation is the extent to which it depends upon a reading of the philosophy of Martin Heidegger as interpreted by Iranian scholar Ahmad Fardid, who essentially recast the colonially-inspired opposition between East and West around Heidegger's notion of historical truth. By shifting the critique of the European Enlightenment and German culture into an idealization of Islam and the Orient, Fardid and later Al-e Ahmad proposed a new path to authenticity. "In this construction of West and orient as bearing opposing essences, with the Orient harboring the ontologically legitimate truth capable of overcoming the technological nihilism engendered by the West, Fardid's *Gharbzadegi* (Westoxification) is the interlude between the self and being on the path to renewed Islamic self-realization"²⁰. It seems highly ironic that projects of redemption from alienation that focus on Islamic and Asian identity employ conceptual strategies and arguments derived from the heart of European culture (although admittedly deriving from its internal critics). But similar observations might be made of other Iranian thinkers, such as Ali Shari'ati, whose concept of revolutionary Shi'ism admittedly depended on Marxist categories while simply redefining them as Islamic²¹. It is also striking to see the extent to which Egyptian Islamist thinker Sayyid Qutb also drew upon European and American

¹⁸ Sadiki. P. 116.

¹⁹ Mirsepassi A. «Religious Intellectuals and Western Critiques of Secular Modernity», CSSAAME 26/3 (2006). P. 418.

²⁰ Ibid. P. 420.

²¹ Ibid. P. 427.

authors in the very negative diagnosis of the West proposed in his *Islam and the Problems of Civilization* (1962); the tragic situation of modernity, in his view, had to be solved by Islam rather than liberal democracy or Marxism²². In the case of these Muslim Occidentalists drawing upon European thinkers, the true lesson we should draw is the extent to which it is impossible to separate Islam from “the West” in the modern era.

While noting these intellectual linkages between anti-western ideas and their Western origins, it is also important for us not to over-read this as a case of derivative thinking. Cemil Aydin has observed in a critique of Buruma and Margalit that it is nevertheless important to recognize “the distinction between the ‘dehumanizing’ Occidental discourse on the west and the otherwise authentic Muslim critiques of modernity, international order, and colonialism. Should Muslims, whether Islamists or secular, not criticize the West at all? In the absence of a distinction between dehumanizing and progressive critiques, the Occidentalism paradigm can reduce all critiques of the West by Muslims either to an ‘underdeveloped’ copy of German romanticism or to a contagious Eurocentric disease of critique without any humanistic irredeemable content”²³. Aydin has shown how Islamist thinkers in Republican Turkey used Occidental rhetoric “about the decadent, materialist, positivist, soulless, immoral, communist, individualistic, and ‘Masonic’ West” to attack the secular regime of Mustafa Kemal in Turkey²⁴. It is of course striking to see that in recent years Islamist parties in Turkey have become pragmatic advocates of Turkish accession to the European Union, so evidently modifications can be made in the previously negative forms of Occidentalism.

At this point I would like to focus in more closely on the category of religion in the representation of East and West. This plays out in the dialectic of struggle between secular regimes and Islamist movements, for instance in Arab countries where “the Orientalists... are not Westerners but rather Westernizers... French *laïcisme* informs political behavior in the Tunisian and Algerian centers of power”²⁵. Just as European-style secularism informs governmental concepts of Islamists as anti-democratic and extremist, so too do Islamists have their own vocabulary for describing their opponents. Interviews with Islamists in a variety of countries have indicated that the vocabulary of Islamic ethics (*akhlāq*) forms the basis for the most important critiques of the West and its democracy, in terms of sexual perversity, imperialism, and materialism²⁶. Despite the intrinsic interest of these observations, however, the stark difference between these opposing secularist and Islamist

²² Fakhry. P. 100.

²³ Aydin C. «Between Occidentalism and the Global Left: Islamist Critiques of the West in Turkey», *CSSAAME* 26/3 (2006). P. 447.

²⁴ *Ibid.* P. 453.

²⁵ Sadiki L. «Occidentalism: The “West” and “Democracy” as Islamist constructs», *Orient* 39/1 (1998). P. 103—120, quoting p. 108—9.

²⁶ *Ibid.*