CONCLUSION

The thesis breaks with the conceptual space of privileged epistemology and subject-centred ontologies and psychologies. It shows that the Occident-Orient dichotomy is a result of falsified perceptions cherished by certain ideologies and political interests. The stereotypical perception of the “Orient” is the result of accumulative view based on a given Orientalist tradition and thought, not on actual presentation of facts on the ground. In his discussion of the concept, Said nullifies the invented narrative process that promotes the supposition of determinant factors as a major frame to justify the inclusions and the exclusions of societies, nations, or races at the level of the definition of identity and its cultural, religious, political, social and ethnic associations.

The thesis reveals that Said’s conception of Occident-Orient dichotomy is worked out on two patterns of thought. The first pertains to Orientalist discourse and the creation of cultural dichotomies that classify humanity into ghettos of cultures and races at the top of which is the Aryan and Anglo-Saxon race and Western tradition; the second is the historic question of Palestine which shaped and inspired his view of human relations and the conception of “Othering.” The “idea” of Palestine contextualizes his concept of the Occident-Orient dichotomy, and, at the same time, epitomizes his redeeming cultural relativism and emancipatory humanism.

Said’s alternative solution to these two mastering themes has been examined within two strands of thought that run consequentially in parallel with each other: secular criticism and democratic humanism. Reading contrapuntally, thinking critically, and judging democratically is Said’s significant critical tool for erasing the dichotomous repercussions of epistemological and cultural biases between the “Occident” and the
“Orient”. His professed suggestion of a bi-national, one-state solution consequently reflects his politically ethical commitment to the idea of human coexistence and shows a realistic solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

His conception of Occident-Orient dichotomy has been traced to three levels or parameters. The first level largely dealt with East-West dichotomy with the “Orient” as its broader parameter. The second layer of conception focused on “Arab-Islam” as its enclosed parameter. The last circle of focus was narrowed to the projection of “Palestine” as the zonal and focal point of the total framework of the concept. As a result, it is safe to say that Said’s view of the concept is reconciliatory and dialogic rather than binary and dichotomous.

His discussion of the concept of dichotomy between the “Occident” and “Orient” has revealed a considerable strategic move in his thought from resistance to coexistence, emphasizing the concept of dialogue in resolving the dilemma of the perceptually inimical identities. He has replaced the grim prospect of religious and even civilizational polarization with the prospect of cultural dialogue and interaction between East and West in the hope of finding common ground on the meaning of civil society and the basic conditions for human flourishing on the basis of full equality and mutual respect not of a clash of civilizations.

The trajectory of Said’s work significantly prefigures the Arab critical address to the Western audience. His theory and method represent the Arab secular, intellectual voice. He represents the Palestinian issue in its full argument. He has shown the collaboration between the Zionism and Orientalist/colonialist project whose traumatic legacy is the source of conflict in the Middle-East region. The Israelis’ War of Independence was, in fact, the Palestinians’ War of Dispossession. How critically to
account for the process that precluded the reconciliation between two seemingly irreconcilable histories, and how to put an end to this parallel and paradox, was, the overriding theme of his oeuvre.

Said’s treatment of the question of Palestine was dialectically humanist, not pragmatically nationalist. The question of Palestine, for him, is a question of justice and equality. It is a humanist issue in the first place and political afterwards. It is the cry of the oppressed, colonized, dispossessed, and displaced against the oppressor, the colonizer, the colonialist. Palestine was for him a “historical idea” before it posed itself as a “locale” of national belonging. It is symbolically a historical claim that brings with it the question of land and identity, possession and dispossession, “Self” and “Other”, and “East” and “West”.

Said’s political critique has developed naturally out of the disclosure of injustices, falsehoods and misrepresentations. Consequently, there is no clash between the detachment of the scholarly humanist and the commitment of Said, the polemicist, who argues for Palestinian right. He wrote in a realist vein that was sharply attuned to global realities. His interpretations of the “Western” literary canon, therefore, needed to be interpreted in relation to their particular socio-political and historical contexts and to the human capacity for creation and invention, “the achievement of form by human will and agency” (Humanism and Democratic Criticism 15).

Keeping these general positions in mind, Said’s critique involved reasoning on universalist grounds that the Israel-Palestine question was not just a matter of two stories contesting each other, but one where there was “a truly profound, irreducible injustice” done to the Palestinians “for which the injured side needs to get institutional recognition” (“On Palestinian identity” 126-27). His defence of the Palestinian right to self-
determination, meanwhile, and his advocacy of the Palestinian national movement, was completely in tune with his universalist support for anti-systemic nationalisms. His interventions on the subjects of truth, justice, nationalism and Palestine, were broadly consistent and were largely marked by an extraordinary blend of activism and judiciousness.

Said’s identity was constructed in extremely tense political atmosphere. His experience of Palestine as history and cause came to him early in his life. He shared the stings of dispossession and the pleasure of exile. From such a perspective, his predicament is moral and humanistic rather than material. These early conditions endowed him with a humanistic spectrum that helped him relate his critical concepts to the circumstantial reality and gave rise to his oppositional criticism “as life-enhancing and constitutively opposed to every form of tyranny, domination, and abuse; its social goals are noncoercive knowledge produced in the interests of human freedom” (The World, the Text and the Critic 29). His exile conceptualizes his humanistic dilemma whereby homelessness becomes a state of mind”. The significance of exile is both poignant and stirring as it undergoes his contrapuntal experiences of both “Self” and “Other” -- being a Palestinian living in exile. Nomadism is a salient feature of his thought, and criticism for him is a “nomadic, decentered, and contrapuntal” event (“Reflection on Exile” 186). Therefore, he is neither subject to the power of his national filiations nor to his cultural restraints, but a “sense of being between cultures . . . in and out of things” (qtd. in Parry 19).

Said’s critical endeavor of undoing the hierarchical structure of thought and the “invention” of historical truth demonstrates a constant postmodern cultural relativist trend. Polyphony and counterpoint are two significant strategies of his cultural theory. His work offers ample occasion for viewing polyphony as a representation of a humanist
community, as an emancipatory model, and as a social model that entails the welcoming of difference without othering, dissidence without oppression, acceptance without domination, and diversity in human equality. As he puts it in *Culture and Resistance*, “to break out of our self-constructed mind-forged manacles and look at the rest of the world and deal with it as equals” (20). Therefore, he rejected the mythicizing of history as a tool to create facts and celebrated honoring facts and demystifying myths. His work operates both processes of demythologization and demystification.

Said was an activist with deeply humanist worldview and critical mind who emphasized secularism and constantly warned against bringing religion into the realm of knowledge and politics. He underestimated the moral and intellectual appeal of religious traditions and a religious approach to knowledge. Regarding his treatment of the question of Palestine, Said’s uncompromisingly secular and anti-sectarian views at times made his visions for the future seem incompatible with the region’s realities. His rejection of essentialism reinforced his rejection of absolute truths, or the claim to it.

To suggest that *Orientalsim* was written as an outcry and an assertion of his Palestinian nationalism would be anathema to his view of the “secular” role of the public intellectual which is to open spaces across borders. The shift from the nationalist attitude to humanist consciousness and sacrificing of the affiliation of one’s persecution to that of others found their natural culmination in Said’s understanding of the question of Palestine. The greatest irony about Said’s influence is the fact that the Palestinian experience of suffering, dispossession, denial, death, and elimination was the very experience which had shaped his universalist consciousness, his intellectual generosity and ethical wakefulness.
This culturally relativist trajectory was integrated into his postmodern and panhuman undertakings. This was manifested in his rejection of the chauvinistic and racist criteria that “define a person not by his/her ideas and values, but by his racial origins, religion, or culture” (“Art, Culture and Nationalism” 264). The facility to think in terms of alternative ideas, alternative political strategies, and alternative readings for the sake of others was what determined Said’s immense contribution to the Palestinian cause. He projected Jerusalem as the exemplary idea “of illuminating the difference between an exclusivist, narrowly ideological perception of history and society, and . . . a vision that is catholic, inclusive, and liberating” (“Projecting Jerusalem 11-2).

The thesis has shown that the West has based its conception of Occident-Orient relationship on power/knowledge constellation, and its view of the “Other” has been primarily hierarchical and ideologically political. It has also shown that the concept of Orientalism as an ideology of “othering” was the product of European historicism that placed Europe at the center of the universe and the producer of world history.

Said has been lauded as one of the pioneer thinkers in terms of political critique of otherness. His polemics have promoted a flexible dialectical entwinement of the broad allegorical uses of the concept of the “Other” with a precise historical and geographical orientation toward discourses and conditions that produce others in real social situations. Otherness, for Said, was never a pure philosophical concept; it was never disembodied. In fact, it is precisely in this dialectical understanding of otherness that the epistemological impact of Orientalism resides, beyond the scope of its object of inquiry. Contrary to what certain critics think, Said has been consistent in this respect -- from Orientalism to the late essay Freud and the Non-European. He has always been a non-identitarian thinker who sees the fetishism of the concept of otherness essentially nothing less than the most basic nativism and blatantly uncritical self-orientalization.
To eliminate bias and prejudice, he has introduced a privileged form of critical consciousness that prioritizes methods on the category of thought itself. For the sake of this, he has built and developed his concepts of “worldliness”, “travelling theory”, “contrapuntality”, “voyage in”, and “democratic humanism” as strategic foundations of his critical method and approach. He advocated a radical embrace of all “that is worldly, circumstantial, or socially contaminated” in the interests of reconstituting the relation between “texts and the existential actualities of human life, politics, societies and events” (The World, the Text and the Critic 3, 5). Far from signifying the apotheosis of humanity, the notion of “culture” appeared to him as a system of evaluations or coercions that discriminates, prescribes, and proscribes. For this reason, he rejected the Arnoldian conception of culture and replaced it with a Vician idea of humanity bearing. He also dissolved the familiar distinction between culture and society or civilization in favor of an expanded sense of culture. He carved a space for individual consciousness “at a sensitive nodal point” in which belonging does not connote conformity and functions as critical distance, but inhabits the site of a dialectical interplay between “filialiation” and “affiliation” (15).

By deploying a conceptual view of culture that is affirmatively cosmopolitan, he drove home to public the importance of reconciling one’s identity and the actualities of one’s own culture, society, and history to the reality of other identities, cultures, peoples. Accordingly, by resolving the tension between historicizing the “self” and reificating the “Other,” by knowing ourselves in history as they are in the worldly world, by seeing ourselves as objects, he suggested that we would be able to overcome the hierarchical and dichotomous effects of culture. This critical stand constituted the main foundation of his concept of worldism. Therefore, he considered the classification of the world into “Occident” and “Orient”, the “West” and “Islam”, the “North” and the “South” etc., as a
misleading trap, suitable only for “the mobilization of collective passions than for lucid understanding” (Humanism and Democratic Criticism xvi).

Taken as a whole, Said’s work can be regarded as a project of value-system. His critical ideas introduced in Beginnings, rehearsed and emphasized in The World, the Text and the Critic, largely discussed with a wide scope of instantiation in Orientalism, Culture and Imperialism, and Covering Islam, were treated contextually in texts like The Question of Palestine, Culture and Resistance or even in his memoir Out of Place. The tension that he has noticed, discussed and expounded was resolved in books like Humanism and Democratic Criticism and in his other essays and articles that appeared in different esteemed journals, magazines and newspapers worldwide.

Said’s critique of Orientalism and cultural hegemony, therefore, was not a void act of criticism or a mere expose of the mind. On the contrary, at the heart of his work was the question of alterity. Within the project carried out in Orientalism, he has specifically raised the question of alterity by highlighting the way in which the West has represented the East, its “Other,” according to an “us” and “them” dichotomy.

However, if Said criticized Orientalism as a reflection of Western ethnocentrism, he castigated nativism as a reversed form of the same concept. Falsifying a dichotomy between “East” and “West” and essentializing the “character” and “psyche” of the “Others” constituted a “human failing” on the part of these two extremes of centricism. He reminded us that “any attempt to force cultures and peoples into separate and distinct breeds or essences exposes not only the misrepresentations and falsifications that ensue, but also the way in which understanding is complicit with the power to produce such things as the ‘Orient’ or the ‘West’”, or essentialized identities (Orientalism 349).
The importance of Said emerged from his in-between link that “has undone” and “done” certain points of departure in the colonial and postcolonial discourses. While disestablishing and destabilizing the Orientalist/colonialist and imperialist assumptions of Western superiority and supremacy, he has called for Arab and Muslim scholars to study the other cultures with fair critical insights and secular visions. He has encouraged the use of “voyage in” as a valuably critical tool for understanding the other.

The study unfolds that though the relationship between the “Orient” and the “Occident” has sometimes been conflictual, there have nevertheless been fruitful and significant encounters and exchanges between them in history. Hence, a plea has been made that though the scenario in East-West relations might at present appear pessimistic, a normative element in favor of inter-cultural and inter-civilizational dialogue should be injected in both academia and practical politics, to bring about change and hope for humanity. Said’s humanistic intellectual sphere has facilitated this dialogue between cultures, rendering the Occident-Orient dichotomy as a matter of cultural variations to be morally tolerated, or even culturally accepted rather than a mode of binary perspective and opposite reality.

Although he was not a cultural relativist in the radical sense, Said’s relativism has been incorporated into his polyphonic postmodern and cosmopolitan approach. Cultures for him are hybrid, human histories are intertwined and territories are overlapping. The enculturation process has been seen by Said as a normative factor that should not reveal a parochial or chauvinistic view of the other. His critical and cultural theory entailed that all societies demonstrate cultural diversity and dynamism and, therefore, no culture or society is superior or inferior to the other. Interactions between cultures prove that clear-cut dichotomies between cultures and peoples are false and all the significant and
injustices and inequalities are the result of misinformed, and misconceived systems of knowledge/power apparatuses.

The Westernization tendencies and Orientalist policies have generated anti-Western attitudes in Arab and Muslim world. These have been embodied in the resurgence of Islamist fundamentalism and rejection of modernity as a viable option against those Western policies. These Westernized trends have been viewed as a threat to national character, national culture and national life-style. However, the colonial culture has created a split in the national culture in the Third World, in general, and Arab World, in particular, into two antagonistic tendencies, the first in the name of modernity, the second in the name of tradition. This led to a new cultural movement that aimed at transforming developing societies from transfer of knowledge to cultural creativity, sharing the creation, not just the diffusion, of a common cultural homeland for all humanity. Said was such a presence and influence in the contemporary Arab critical thought.

It can be concluded that Occident-Orient dichotomy has been constructed and perpetuated over time by ideologically oriented goals and supported by a plenty of theoretical perceptions and assumptions. “East” and “West,” though began denoting geographical terms, they have come to assume extra-socio-political and cultural meanings.

It is revealed that the concept of dichotomy between the “Occident” and the “Orient” is nothing but a created myth based on a Western view of the unity of world universal culture. World Culture is a myth created by the Culture of the Center to dominate the periphery in the name of acculturation. There is no One Culture with capital C. There are only multiple cultures, in small c’s. 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 modeling. It means an equal exchange, a give and take, a two-way movement on the levels of language, concepts, horizons, methods, and values.

However, Said has dealt with the concept of dichotomy between the “Occident” and “Orient” from the vantage point of both an insider and outsider. Being an Arab Palestinian living in the West, he has been endowed with the potential of an intellectual who can read the human actions from a detached position. His approach to the concept was that of a postmodern cultural relativist who breaks away with the Orientalist essentialism and sheer Occidentalism. His method has disturbed the positions and relationships of postcolonial Subject/Object, and the way we look to the other. He diffused the gaze between the object “the observed” and the subject “the observer” so that there would be no eternal studying subject and no eternal object of study. The relation between the “Self” and the “Other” is an equal relation, not a high-low relation, an even and sane inter-subjective relation instead of a superiority-inferiority complex. This constructive polemics was the Saidian substitute for the sheer Occidentalism that transforms the subject/object positions.

To Said, Orientalism expressed the searching subject more than it described the object of research. It reveals “Western mentality” more than intuiting “Oriental Soul”. Therefore, it created an epistemological dichotomy supported by an imaginary stereotypical perceptions and theorizations, motivated by the power to know the “Orient”. In order to control and dominate the “Orient,” the West started to demonize and inferiorize it. This was manifested in different aspects of colonial culture such as imperialism, racism, Nazism, Eurocentricism and other packages of hegemonic
ideologies, whereby the Western identity began to formulate a global hegemony, exercising political and economic power over non-Western states and peoples. The inhabitants of West tended to define who they were in relation to who and what they thought they were not. This process entailed drawing a series of sharp contrasts between what they now began to see as “Western” and what they began to see as “non-Western”. From the religious dichotomy in the Medieval Christian Europe to the Renaissance dualistic postulation to the Enlightenment’s universal totalitarianism injections, through nineteenth-century binary thinking and propositions and twentieth-century up to the present day hierarchical classifications of humanity, the West has exerted its definition and identification of itself and the “Other” pervasively to ideologically maintain its political control and cultural hegemony over the world affairs.

In order to balance the East-West dichotomy and engage in meaningful dialogues guided by the principals of peaceful aim, mutual respect, tolerance, and patience, it seems reasonable to cancel out by law-making or binding oaths, any maneuver designed to “cheat”, “take-over”, “support hegemony” and what not evil doings. To achieve this aim, unchecked Eurocentrism and all other “isms” have to be avoided as good as it can be, and at all costs.

The import of Said’s critical project is derived from its stringent zeal to bridge the cultural gap that has been created across accumulated process of backing ideologies and political motivations. He dedicated his work toward redefining and demystifying the vague connotation of power-conditioned and power-oriented Western preconceptions about the East with its bewildering variety of intellectual offences. All essentializing strategies and concepts were discarded by Said as spuriously imposed identities on heterogeneous phenomena. He proclaimed: “To leave the historical world for the metaphysics of essence . . . is to abandon history for the essentializations that have the
power to run human beings against each other” (*Culture and Imperialism* 229). Hence, his theoretical reflection on the inherited notions of East and West has led to reformulating new alternative mappings of the world. This ongoing deconstruction of a traditional problematic is critically fruitful to cultural diversity and human connectivity.

Said was endowed with the privilege to speak as an intellectual who has undergone the cultural experience of colonialism, imperialism, neocolonialism and globalism. Locations are very important in Said’s work. He made it very clear in the beginning of his major work *Orientalism* that he “was writing from a definite position, a position which has moral, intellectual, historical and geographical specificities, and without which much of the import of what he wants to say will be lost” (Bhattacharya 110). Thus, he was not really writing about the Orientals and what they thought of themselves or of the Occidentals in idiosyncratic sense. Throughout his critical gamut, he painstakingly worked toward debunking the dichotomous discourses that assume “a justification and a rationalisation of the raw violence and expropriation unleashed by the ruling classes of a few countries on very large population in others” (111).

Said rejected the concept of “cultural purity” as a form of “essentialist” discourse. He believed that essentialization breeds “Othering” and “Othering” produces hegemonic and totalitarian systems. Therefore, he distinguished between “difference” as a natural distinguishable feature among peoples, cultures and individuals, and “Othering” as an ideologically constructive tool and mechanism. He ascribed “Otherness” less to the difference of the “Other” than to the point of view and the discourse of the person who perceives the “Other” as such. In his view, opposing “Us”, the “Self”, and “Them”, the “Other”, is to choose a criterion that allows humanity to be divided inhumanly. To state it naïvely, difference belongs to the realm of fact and otherness belongs to the realm of discourse. He asserted, “There is, after all, a profound difference between the will to
understand for purposes of co-existence and enlargement of horizons, and the will to dominate for the purposes of control” (*Orientalism* xiv).

As a result, he embraced a more humanistic position that upheld human agency, active political engagement and the possibility of non-coercive, non-dominating kinds of knowledge. His notions of “intertwined histories” and “overlapping territories” demonstrate that the historical experience is a mutual act of involvement. It is impossible to wipe out or cover up other’s involvement: “The difficulty with theories of essentialism and exclusiveness, or with the barriers and sides, is that they give rise to polarizations that absolve and forgive ignorance and demagogy more than they enable knowledge (*Culture and Imperialism* 31). Consequently, Orientals and Occidentals cannot escape the doom of cohabitation and to have friendly worldly relations and to make a process of cultural dialogue and positive interaction. He based his argument ethically on the principle that “There cannot be any such thing as a pure race, a pure nation, or a pure collectivity, regardless of patriotic, ideological, or religious argument. A corollary to this is that all efforts . . . at making pure one or several of these human agglomerations are tantamount to organized discrimination or persecution” (“An Ideology of Difference” 81)

Said’s secular response to the religiously self-endowed vision of Palestine was that historically Palestine, as a “locale” and an “idea” was – and still is – an immensely significant territory: an over-determined palimpsest, a place holy to three world religions, a site saturated with the mysterious entanglement, and a closed universal center whose transcendent meaning is antithetical to earthbound reality. It is therefore “worldist” idea for cultural diversity and human coexistence, and at the same time, an idea of human suffering, injustice and dislocation.
His humanism is ultimately a product of his multifaceted nature as a literary critic, cultural theorist and political activist, and of his being an intellectual in exile. It is redeemingly an emancipatory project to subject human knowledge and experience to critical investigation and human cohabitation. For this reason, he castigated the adoration of certain cultural pattern as an Arnoldian touchstone and destabilized the canonical tradition of “the great works” that sublimated and subordinated others to secondary station. Hence, “what is proceeded,” he professes, “is an extended mediation on the usable scope of humanism as an ongoing practice and not as a profession, on what humanistic activity is about rather than a list of claims and desirable attributes . . . what concerns me is humanism as a usable praxis”. Accordingly, he ruled out what can be called imposed humanism or “humanitarian intervention,” for “many of its results struck people as inhumane” (Humanism and Democratic Criticism 6, 7). He considered these interventions as pure politics and double-edged ideology that single out one nation and closes eyes on another. For him injustice is injustice whether in Iraq, Rwanda, America, Palestine, etc.

Having recognized that there are different types of culture, intertwined histories of human experience, and overlapping territories of human geographies, this study rests upon the recognition of equal interlocution that place the human above the political. In addition, to further convey the message of Said and for the sake of a serious dialogue and to keep it worthwhile and mutually respectable, it is to be highlighted that ideas, positions, and values can be much more effectively communicated through a naturally pluralistic reality, primarily in the form of peer-to-peer, face-to-face discussions, on the basis that the “Occident” and the “Orient” are willing and equal interlocutors. This helps to build trust and to correct the widespread distorted images. It further entails that neither all of Arab and Muslims’ problems are due to the Western factor, action and intention.
Likewise, it is unfair to assume the Western leaders always operate in bad faith as it is unrealistic to believe that they always operate in good faith either. Instead, trust, but verify.
Works Cited

