

CULTURE, POWER AND DISCOURSE: ENGAGING WITH THE DISCOURSE OF ORIENTALISM

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ABSTRACT

Edward Said considers all writings in the diverse fields of history, fiction, sociology, anthropology and political theory under the rubric of Orientalism. He considers Orientalism as a discourse in the Foucauldian mould and says that without considering Orientalism as a discourse, it would be impossible to understand the systematic way in which Europe managed its “other”, that is the Orient. He quotes extensively from literature, history and sociology to establish that the West created the Orient according to certain rules characteristic to Orientalism. Said says that all the writers, thinkers and philosophers who wrote about the Orient, wrote with the basic assumptions that there was an Orient which was different from Europe and Said finds this notion ubiquitous in all Western thoughts.

Keywords: *Edward Said, Orientalism, Foucault, Mathew Arnold, Culture, Europe, Orient*

The concept of culture entails the concept of hierarchy. Matthew Arnold says in his “Culture and Anarchy” that ‘culture is the best that is known and thought’ and that ‘the great men of culture are those who have had a passion for diffusing, for making prevail, for carrying from one end of the society to the other, the best knowledge, the best ideas of their time; who have laboured to divest knowledge of all that was harsh uncouth, difficult, abstract, professional, exclusive....’¹ This concept of culture has two quite different ramifications: (a) the positive doctrine of diffusing and making prevail the best ideas and thought of the age and (b) the combative position in which the best ideas and thoughts have to compete with ‘less than best’ ideologies, philosophies, dogmas, notions and values. Said stresses the combative position in which the system of values or the best ideas and thoughts that we name culture, is, and says that what is overlooked is the fact that apart from the avowed purpose of cultivation of individuals, culture is defined and is made identifiable by the successful achievement of hegemony over all other contending ideas in the society. This hegemony of culture (the dominant ideas and thoughts) won after marginalizing contending ideas, thought and system of values makes the position of culture superior in the society and the exercise of this hegemony over the society gradually makes the canons and standards of the culture so invisible that they look ‘natural’ and ‘objective’ and ‘real’.

Looking into the matter from the combative position, Said says that ‘culture is a system of exclusions legislated from above but enacted throughout its polity, by which such things as anarchy, disorder, irrationality, inferiority, bad taste and immorality are identified and then deposited outside’.² If it is true that culture is, on the one hand, a positive doctrine of the best that is thought and known, it is also on the other hand a negative doctrine of all that is not “best.”

Said admires Michel Foucault's concept of the hegemonizing institutionalized process that is honorifically called culture, by which certain alterities, certain Others are kept silent and outside. In his books whose English translation read *Madness and Civilization*, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* and *The History of sexuality*, Foucault has shown the processes by which the irrational, the immoral and the sexually deviant have been systematically muted and marginalized. It is precisely the purpose of culture to keep intact what is considered appropriate and to marginalize and keep muted all that is considered inappropriate and a threat to the reigning culture.

Texts incorporate discourse. Foucault says that a discourse consists 'of anonymous and historical rules, always specific as to time and place, and which for a given period and within a social, economic, geographic or linguistic zone, define the framework within which the enunciative functions are exercised'.³ The focus in this definition is on 'historical rules' governing discourse. This focus necessarily affiliates the text to the world, to circumstantial reality. Moreover, the word anonymous in Foucault's definition chimes with Said's view in Orientalist discourse where the Western representation of the Orient is shown as the result of institutionalized guild scholarship and not the result of individual agency. It is precisely the purpose of Said to show that the Orientalist view or representation of the Orient was not premised on individual presentation but was the result of a more impersonal determinant, discourse.

Culture being the dominant set of ideas, the best that is thought and known, in a given society, it is identifiable with a determinate class which uses it to enforce its rules and regulations and foster its interests. Culture therefore is identifiable with power. Knowledge, truth, and discourse, according to Foucault are identifiable with the hegemony of a particular social group. Discussing intellectuals and power with Deleuze, Foucault stressed the underpinning politics in theories: the role of theory is 'no longer a striving to attain consciousness but simply a struggle "for undermining and capturing authority"'. Theory is not like a pair of glasses; it is rather like a pair of guns; it does not enable one to see better but to fight better.'⁴

Foucault treads on Nietzschean paths of disclaiming the veracity of truth and equating all knowledge and truth claims to strategies of power. Of the three masters of suspicion, Freud, Marx and Nietzsche, it was Nietzsche who taught to distrust reason and truth. Foucault too, 'is deeply suspicious of truth claims; to him every knowledge, even science is a tool of the will to power. Epistemes are merely species of the genus power apparatus; particular branches of knowledge obey strategies of domination, in fact "invent" their objects so that man and earth can be better controlled. Reason is a technology of power; science, an instrument of domination'.⁵ This concept of ubiquitous power pervading all knowledge and truth claim is echoed by Said when he says, "Politics in everywhere; there can be no escape into the realm of pure art or, for that matter, into the realm of disinterested objectivity or transcendental theory"⁶

In tracing the genealogy of the modern subject, Foucault takes a Nietzschean perspective in concentrating of power-knowledge (*Pouvoir-Savoir*); a perspective in which all will to truth in already a will to power. Knowledge is enmeshed with power for Foucault. He says rather

succinctly that power properly speaking is really over others, not over things -- that is, it is a matter of domination, not of capacity.

There are many theories of power - the economic theory that sees power as a function of class domination; the repression theory or the non-economic theory which says that power is above all a relation of force and finally a third one that sees power not in economic or repressive terms but as *war*. 'Power is war, says Foucault, a war continued by other means,'⁷ More precisely, power, within a given society, is unspoken warfare: it is a silent, secret, civil war that re-inscribes conflict in various social institutions in economic inequalities, in language, in the bodies themselves of each and every one of us.⁸ Foucault says that the repressive theory and the war theory of power are in fact one. The purpose of the war within a society is to repress that which is considered dangerous and/or deviant. Foucault says that in a given society, '*the production of discourse is at once controlled, selected, organized and redistributed according to a certain number of procedures whose role is to avert its powers and dangers, to cope with chance events, to evade its ponderous, awesome materiality*'⁹ Discourse is the systematic conversion of power relationship between controller and controlled into mere written words. This leads to saying that the discursive positions are not equal -- that is, it is not a relationship of equality between hearer and speaker or between the writer and reader. For Said, the discursive situation is like the unequal relation between colonizers and colonized, between oppressors and oppressed.

Texts are written discursive formations or discourses. In their book *Official Discourse*, Frank Burton and Pat Carlen try to show the way in which discourses effect the perpetuation of the domination of the classes whom they serve. These sociologists see knowledge - as - power relations in official discourses and accordingly say that the discursive strategies are planned and executed in such a way that they simultaneously serve the purpose of undermining the Other (with its extra - discursive conditions of existence) and at the same time elevating discursive conditions as guarantors of the discourse's validity. 'The primary discursive task is to position forms of the subject Official discourse selects modes of subjectivity to constitute, first, an effective authorial subject (the addressor) and second, the addressee subject through whom the text is ideally read'.¹⁰ (Official) Discourses place, fix and orient subjects to desired positions. The politics of discourse talked about by Foucault, Said and other post - colonial critics is anticipated by Antonio Gramsci when he says: 'Every relationship of hegemony is a pedagogic relationship.'¹¹

Marxist critics are more penetrating in their critique of official discourse. For the Marxists, official '(state) discourse uses the language of administrative rationality, normative redeemability and consensual values to indicate itself as functioning within a democratic mode of argument. The state's image as the embodiment of popular sovereignty appears because state discourse reproduces notions of the free - choosing discriminating subjects and claims itself as their agency'.¹²

Discourses are thus politically motivated with the undeclared but implicitly avowed purpose of presenting, valorising the 'self' with reference to the 'other'. We can say with Volosinov that, '(each and every word) is a two - sided act. It is determined equally by whose word it is and for whom it is meant. As word it is precisely the product of the reciprocal relationship between

speaker and listener, addressor and addressee. Each and every word expresses the 'one' (self) in relation to the 'other'.¹³

To illustrate the Foucauldian dictum that the production of discourse in a society is controlled, selected, organized and redistributed according to certain rules and procedures which ultimately aim at the control of society by averting through discursive practices the powers and dangers, we can cite numerous examples. Especially pertinent in the context of my endeavour is the use of English literature in the control of native Indian society and the consolidation of British power in India. Gauri Vishwanathan argues in her paper, "The Beginnings of English Literary Studies in British India," that the introduction of English literature in British India represented a response to the embattled historical and political pressures: to tensions between the English Parliament and the East India Company, between the Parliament and the missionaries (proselytizing activities) and between the East India Company and the native elite classes. Vishwanathan shows how English texts became the props of English domination in India.

There were manifold problems that craved attention of the English rulers at home after the conquest of Bengal and adjoining areas. One of the major problems was the unchecked and unabashed demoralization of the English 'nabobs' whose avarice and depravity caused oppression of the natives in immense and almost unprecedented measure. This caused much embarrassment to those at home and the Parliament in particular who could not endorse the excesses of the company officials with their moral sense which imbued the 'civilizational mission' and to which they were passionately attached as a justification of their 'right of conquest'. As compensation to the oppressed and traumatized native population and as a remedial measure, the Parliament, in the charter Act of 1813, stated that 'England was obligated to promote the "interests and happiness" of the natives and that measures ought to be adopted "as may tend to the introduction among them of useful knowledge, and of religious and moral improvement"'.¹⁴ It is quite an ironical fact of history that England's initial involvement with the education of the natives derived not from a conviction of native immorality as later characterizations of natives imply but from the depravity of their own administrators and merchants. In the words of Edmund Burke, steps had to be taken to 'form a strong and solid security for the natives against the wrongs and oppression of the British subjects resident in Bengal'.¹⁵ In the fluid situation of the early colonial India, the responsibility enjoined upon the English East India Company of the education of the native populace - a responsibility which the English government itself did not bear to its subjects in England - has implications resonating with political overtones.

Education of the natives, which was now the function of the state after the Charter Act of 1813, had contentious issues in it as well. The main controversy was regarding the mode of education - whether it should be Oriental or Anglicist. Either of them could serve the purpose of mutual understanding of cultures. The problem of distance between the ruler and the ruled and the concomitant problems in administration were put by a British administrator thus, 'we rule over them and traffic with them, but they do not understand our character, and we do not penetrate theirs. The consequence is that we have no hold on their sympathies, no seat in their affections'.¹⁶ In the mutual understanding of cultures between the English and the natives, both Oriental and Anglicist models could suffice. Anglicism aimed at acculturation of the natives in the ruler's culture while Orientalist

mode of education aimed at what may be termed reverse acculturation, whose goal was to train British administrators and civil servants to fit into the culture of the ruled and to assimilate them thoroughly into the native way of life.

Despite the differences in opinion regarding language, both the Oriental and the Anglicist programmes of education assumed and supported a common method of governance: in both, an influential native class was to be co-opted as the conduit of Western thought and ideas.

According to the political ground situation, British administrators opted either for Orientalist mode or the Anglicist mode of education. In the early phase, that of the Governor-generalship of Warren Hastings the Orientalist mode was adopted. Warren Hastings encouraged Oriental learning and Orientalism was adopted as the official policy because Hastings understood that efficient administration could be achieved only through an understanding of India Culture. Oriental scholarship flourished and a number of gifted and outstanding scholars of the likes of William Jones, Henry. T. Colebrook, Jonathan Halhead, Charles Wilkins, achieved distinctions through pioneering achievements. Orientalists had ambitious goals, ranging from the initiation of the West to the vast literary treasures of the East to the reintroduction of the natives to their own cultural heritage which was said to have been buried under the debris of foreign conquest and the indifference of the rulers. Whatever is said in favour of the benign and productive influence of Oriental scholarship, 'there is no denying that behind Orientalism's exhaustive enquiries, its immense scholarly achievements and discoveries lay interests that were far from scholarly'.¹⁷

As Warren Hastings clearly understood that 'every accumulation of knowledge and specially such as is obtained by social communication with people over whom we exercise a dominion founded on the right of conquest, *is useful to the state: it is the gain of humanity*'.¹⁸ Hastings clearly understood the powerful reinforcing impact of Orientalist knowledge (scholarship) on state authority. This is what Edward said has called the 'dialectic of information and control' and characterized as the basis of academic Orientalism. In Hastings's words we see that the acquisition of knowledge about those whom it governs is of vital interest to the state for the purposes of domination and control. Gauri Vishwanathan raises an important and interesting point by pointing at the significance of the words, 'it is the gain of humanity'. She says that English domination gains legitimacy and moral sanction from the fact that it produced knowledge that had 'humanistic worth', that enriched the world of scholarship. The *social communication* which is a euphemism for cultural domination may have its roots in the impulse to enforce domination over the natives, as Hastings duly acknowledges, its political motivation is nullified by the knowledge it produces and makes available to the rest of mankind. The disinterestedness and objectivity of the knowledge which Oriental scholarship produces helps to confirm the states' 'right to conquest' which becomes the prerequisite for knowledge production.

After a lull in the fervour of Orientalist scholarship and 'knowledge-production' in the Governor-general ship of Cornwallis, Oriental scholarship again came into prominence with the efforts of some politically astute and skilled administrators like John Malcolm, Thomas Munro, Mountstuart Elphinstone and Charles Metcalf. These administrators understood that the official patronage to Oriental scholarship meant the preservation of the feudal character of the British rule

by preserving the hegemonic structure of the society. The feudal character of the government with its personal rigidly stratified and hierarchized structure was more suited to British interests because it was more resilient than the impersonal and centralized bureaucratic administration of the Cornwallis period. It was better suited in the volatile political scenario of the period as the native elite became the intermediate class which could serve to absorb the effects of foreign domination. To conciliate the displaced traditional elite, Oriental learning and scholarship was promoted which gave them importance. Moreover, it was thought that no political tradition could be created anew or superimposed on another without a violent rejection of it by the pre-existing society. For a new political society to emerge, it was necessary that the pre-existing society and the native tradition and culture provide the soil for its growth. Therefore, there was the promotion of the traditional Orientalist scholarship.

Both Orientalism and Anglicism were tied to questions of administrative structure and governance: the question was how were Indian subjects to be imbued with a sense of public responsibility and honour and by what means could the concept of the Western style government be impressed on their minds to facilitate the business of the state?

The 'moral and intellectual edification' of the natives had to be accomplished for them to understand their moral and political responsibilities. But the Christian religion could not be the source of moral edification much to the chagrin and dismay of the missionaries. The English parliamentarians were astute enough to note that direct interference in religion could lead to insurrection and prove harmful to the juvenile British Raj. So religious neutrality was to be observed and in keeping with this policy the Bible was proscribed and scriptural teaching forbidden. Oriental learning and scholarship could not be sustained for long as the British came to learn swiftly that Oriental scholarship could not be promoted without exposing the Hindus and the Muslims to the moral and religious tenets to their respective faiths -- a situation that was clearly not tenable with the stated goal of 'moral and intellectual improvement.'

The English parliament understood that distinct advantages would accrue from the missionary activities and their contact with natives and their 'many immoral and disgusting habits' but at the same time could not take the risk of reaction to large scale proselytizing activities. The dichotomy was productively resolved by the *introduction of English literature*. Since religious hyperactivity was detrimental to British interests, a secular policy had to be adopted. However secular knowledge was considered an unmixed evil as it tended to improve the intellectual standard of the natives without at the same time giving them moral principles to guide their intellects. Missionaries were always vociferous against secular policy in pedagogical enterprises. As the Rev. W. Keane argued, the exclusion of the Bible (religious teaching) had a demoralizing effect as it tended to produce evils in the country and to give to the native mind, 'unity of opinion which before it never had and political thoughts, which they get out of our European books, but which it is impossible to reconcile with our position in that country. Political thoughts of liberty and power, which would be good if they were only the result of a noble ambition of the natural mind for something superior, but which when they arise without religious principles, produce an effect which, to my mind, is one of unmixed evil'.¹⁹

It was through literature that the English aimed at controlling the native population. Orientalist Horace Wilson was of the opinion that only literature could serve to protect British presence in India because through literature, the British could control the feelings and emotions of the natives. He says, 'only when we initiate them into our literature particularly at an early age and get them to adopt feelings and sentiments from our standard writers, (can) we make an impression upon them, and effect any considerable alteration in their feelings and notions'²⁰ Moreover, through literature, it would be possible to talk about Western thoughts and ideas without at the same time risking the danger of inculcating radical ideas in the native mind as literature with its emphasis on moral good and happiness views politics through the safe medium of morals. Through English literature, which was thoroughly imbued with religious ideals and morals the English administration could ingrain in the native mind religious and moral sentiments without explicitly talking about religion. For spreading the 'diffusive benevolence of Christianity' among the natives, English literature was chosen because it was held that English literature was 'imbued with the spirit of Christianity' so that 'without ever looking into the Bible one of those Natives must come to a considerable knowledge of it merely from reading English literature'²¹ However, a counter-claim was made at the same time that English literature is not interwoven to the same extent with the Christian religion as the Hindu religion is with the Sanskrit language and literature. What is being said is not paradoxical but instead a subtle ideological activity whereby a body of texts (English literary texts) came to be removed from their social formation and then assigned functions that obscured the historical forces which produced them. (It is pertinent to note here that in English social history the church had an important role in education and educational institutions. Well into the nineteenth Century, education in England shared many common features -- curricula, goals, and practices -- and was fully integrated with the church. Even after the ideological supremacy of the established churches eroded, churches continued to function as interest groups and kept influencing educational development.) Through this subtle ideological rhetoric, English literature was dissociated from its involvement with religion and presented as intellectual production in contrast to Oriental literature which was directly affiliated to religion as much as to set itself up as a source of divine authority. English literature was presented as intellectual production and not divine productions and so reason and logic came to be associated with literature which, the English rulers claimed was completely new to a country where literature was the outcome of divine authority. Seen in this perspective, English literature prepared the native mind for reasoning and thinking and looking for evidence which disciplined the native mind for intellectual endeavours. The dissociation of English literature from its religious antecedents gave it scientific character and served to objectify the knowledge it contained. Not seen in the light of divine production, literature was open to doubt and this battle between doubt and received information (from texts) helped in the establishment of truth more reliably than simple belief in received tradition. English literature was elaborately set up as the highest example of intellectual production, empirical reasoning and its transformation into scientific, rational and objective truth was all but a *fait accompli*.

The presentation of English literature as objective, empirical, rational and intellectual production had political motivation. It was perceived by the English administrators that by blurring the distinction between religion and literature, the ruling classes in India had arrogated all power to decipher texts unto themselves. The blurring of the distinction between religion and literature helped

the ruling classes to monopolize power. 'Truth' was what the explicator (the class learned in Arabic and Sanskrit) said to be true. The colonial administrators saw into the game of the native elite who derived their power and hold on the masses from their position as sole explicators of texts construed as divine knowledge. The colonial administrators' reasoning went along these lines : if by blurring the distinction between religion and literature, the native elite had monopolized and arrogated all power unto itself, would not an erosion of the power base ensue if the authority vested in the explicator were relocated elsewhere -- that is, if authority were reinvested in a body of texts presented as objective, scientific, rational, empirically verifiable truth, the product not of an exclusive social or political class but of a consciousness that spoke in a universal voice and for the universal good.²²

What English literature did was more than just erode the authority of the native elite by relocating the authority of explication of texts and thereby help in weakening their hold on the masses. It obscured the Englishman as colonialist and oppressor by presenting the English character through the products of the mental labour of the best of them. Making the Englishman known to the natives through the products of his mental labour served a valuable purpose in that it removed him from the place of ongoing colonialist activity -- of commercial operations, military expansion, administration of territories and de-actualized and diffused his material presence in the process. In a crude reworking of the Cartesian axiom, production of thought defined the Englishman's true essence, overriding all other aspects of his identity -- his personality, actions, behaviours,²³ As the statement by C.E. Trevelyan suggests, the English literary text functioned as a surrogate Englishman is his highest and most perfect state : '[The Indians] daily converse with the best and wisest Englishmen through the medium of their works, and form ideas, perhaps higher ideas of our nation than if their intercourse with it were of a more personal kind'²⁴

This shows how English literature served to represent the rapacious, exploitative and ruthless actor of history into a reflective subject of literature. This is ample evidence to prove the involvement of the text in the world. Even when literature was being presented by the colonial administrators as intellectual and rational knowledge with scientific and objective verifiable truth in it, it was enmeshed in worldly circumstances and more precisely in power politics. 'British parliamentary papers have provided compelling evidence (for the argument) that humanistic functions traditionally associated with the study of literature -- for example, the shaping of character or the development of the aesthetic sense or the disciplines of ethical thinking -- are also essential to the process of socio-political control.'²⁵

It is quite an ironical fact of history that what is now known as the constitutive field of English literary studies was introduced in colonial India first and then later on adopted in the mother country. In England, the aristocracy maintained a monopoly over church dominated education and instituted a classical course of studies that it shared with the clergy but from which the middle and the working classes were systematically excluded. The classical curriculum reserved for the aristocracy became the prerequisite for social leadership and privilege. The alliance between church and education (culture) protected and supported the existing system of social stratification: while the classical curriculum served to confirm the ruling class in their superior social status, religious

instruction was given to the lower orders to fit them in various duties of life and to secure them in their appropriate stations. Two educational movements of the 18th Century England serve to illustrate this distinction between education curricula as also to show the powerful influence of discourse in matters of socio-political control. Both the charity school and the Sunday school movement grew out of the concern over the alarming rise of urban squalor and crime and out of a conviction that unless the lower classes were brought into the Christian orbit, the social harmony and *status quo* would be hard to preserve. It was held that only instruction in sound religious principles as would 'recommend industry, gratitude, submission, and the like virtues' would prevent such a catastrophe. The education and philosophy of social control adopted by these institutions of the era was summed up by Hannah More, when she said, 'Principles, not opinions are what I labour to give them.'²⁶

Apart from the Bible, the curriculum in these institutions included religious tracts, textbooks, parables, sermons, homilies and prayers, many of which were specially written for inclusion in the curriculum. The religious bias of the curriculum eliminated all secular works by which was generally meant works of the imagination. 'As late as the 1860's, the literary curriculum in England was polarized around classical studies for the upper classes and religious studies for the lower classes. As for what is now known as the subject of English literature, the British educational system had no firm place for it until the last quarter of the nineteenth century, when the challenge posed by the middle classes to the existing structure resulted in creation of alternative institutions devoted to modern studies'.²⁷

In the Indian context, such explicit religious education based on Christianity could not serve the purpose as natives could have been alarmed at the prospect of large-scale proselytizing so literature with sound Christian principles served to give the same moral and religious principles which explicit religious instruction did in England. The same relationship of instruction and control guided English administrators of India when they incorporated selected English literary texts into the curriculum, the claim being that they support a body of morality which is also the staple of Christian faith. The process of curricular selection was based on the *implicit relationship between instruction, morality and social control* that had worked so successfully for the ruling elite in England. Such weighty pronouncements as 'sound protestant Bible principles' in Shakespeare, 'the strain of serious piety' in Addison's *Spectator* Papers, the 'scriptural morality' of Bacon and Locke, the devout 'sentiment' of Abercrombie, the 'noble Christian sentiments' in Adam Smith's *Moral Sentiments*²⁸ went into the formation of the Indian English literary curriculum aiming at bringing moral and religious sentiments for the purpose of effective social control.

This process of curricular selection and its implementation clearly shows the complicity of the so called objective and disinterested knowledge in the ruling class's efforts to control the society.

Said employs Michel Foucault's notion of discourse as described by him in his *Archaeology of Knowledge* and *Discipline and Punish*. In his book *Orientalism* Said says in the introduction to his book that without examining Orientalism as a discourse, (in the Foucauldian sense) it would not be possible to understand the enormously systematic discipline through which

Europe managed and even produced the Orient -- socially, politically, ideologically and imaginatively. Orientalism as a scholarly discipline had so authoritative a position and churned out such a formidable discourse that no one who wished to study the Orient could do so without taking into account the various limitations on thought and action imposed by the discourse. In other words, Orientalist discourse precludes the possibility of seeing the Orient independently; Orientalism ensured that the Orient was not a free subject of thought and action. Foucault's concept of discourse has it that it is a set of 'anonymous and historical rules, which for a given period and within a social, economic, geographic or linguistic zone define the framework within which the enunciative functions are exercised.' The 'framework' that Foucault talks of is elastic for Said as he says that 'it is not to say that Orientalism (as a discourse) unilaterally determines what can be said about the Orient, but that it is the whole network of interests inevitably brought to bear on (and therefore, always involved in) any occasion when that peculiar entity 'the Orient' is in question.'²⁹

As a system of thought and ideas guided by the discourse of Orientalism, Orientalism as an academic discipline was not free from its involvement in the world as Said's phrase in the preceding paragraph, 'a whole network of interest' has it. Orientalism, whatever its claim for supra political objectivity and transcendental truth, is the result of the West's involvement with the East. Said contests the claim of any such 'objective and 'transcendental' knowledge that denies its derivativeness from the world and says that though there may be some academic disciplines more involved in matters pertaining directly to political power relations while some less involved, there is nothing as "true" knowledge free from the encumbering facts of power. As for example, economics, politics and sociology may be taken to be more involved in facts political while literature less involved. But as has been shown in Said's *Orientalism* and other works like *Culture and Imperialism*, the detachment of knowledge and power or politics is more rather than less problematic. Said says:

'No one has ever devised a method for detaching the scholar from the circumstances of life, from the fact of his involvement (conscious or unconscious) with a class, a set of beliefs, a social position, or from the mere activity of being a member of a society. These continue to bear on what he does professionally, even though naturally enough his research and its fruits do attempt to reach a level of relative freedom from the inhibitions and the restrictions of brute, everyday reality.'³⁰ Since no knowledge can disclaim its author's involvement as a human subject in the circumstances of his actuality, an Orientalist who came to the Orient from the mother country as a historian, academician, ethnographer, missionary or frankly political administrator, could not be oblivious of the fact of his being an inhabitant of a colonizing country with definite economic and political interests in the colonized country. Said opines that this is not an inert fact for 'Orientalism (as a field of study) brings one up directly against that question -- that is, to realizing that political imperialism governs an entire field of study, imagination and scholarly institutions -- in such a way as to make its avoidance an intellectual and historical impossibility.

Said says that there is nothing like pure knowledge unvitiated by the involvement of historical and political matters in scholarly enterprises. All knowledge is political and therefore Orientalism as a field of study emerged from the dynamic exchange between individual authors and

the large political concerns shaped by the three great empires - British, French, and American - in whose intellectual and imaginative territory, the writing was produced.

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