

## **Eurocentrism, Islam, and the intellectual politics of civilizational framing**

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A curious thing that I came across recently is the fashion in Pakistan for constructing replicas of the Eiffel Tower in residential developments. There is a quarter-size one in Bahria Town, a high-prestige gated community in Lahore.<sup>1</sup> An earlier one exists in Rawalpindi, constructed by the same well-known developer. Urban housing formations such as those where these replicas are placed go back to British colonial reform programs that created »modern« neighborhoods in South Asian cities (Glover 2007). Upon exploring this further, it appears that replicas of the Eiffel Tower can be found all over the world, constructed since the late nineteenth century in Europe outside of Paris as well as in Africa, Asia, and the Americas. The Tower's proliferation in visual media signifies modernity, technological capacity, monumentality, and high fashion. Large-scale replicas in places such as Pakistan have their own specific histories irrespective of the original reference. They project class aspiration and the leisurely lifestyle associated with travel to Europe that is possible for a minuscule percentage of Pakistan's population.

I begin with this example in order to highlight the difference between Europe as a place versus Europe as a set of ideas. The Eiffel Tower in Paris is the emblem of Europe as a geographical location. Its construction marks an important moment in modern French history, and the structure sits at the center of one of the most heavily touristed cities in the world. While connected to Paris, the similitudes of the Eiffel Tower betoken European ideas that have become indigenized in places far away

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1 »Eiffel Tower, Bahria Town Lahore,« Bahria News, News and Information about Bahria Town, April 2015, <http://bahrianews.blogspot.com/2015/04/eiffel-tower-bahria-town-lahore.html>.

from France. Unknown and unimportant to most Parisians and Europeans, these other Eiffel Towers hold significant positions in the material and social worlds that surround them. Most people who look at these towers know and care little about the history of Paris or the Eiffel Tower. But over the past two centuries, circumstances have developed in such a way that it is impossible to avoid Europe as a symbolic point of reference, no matter where one is located in the world.

The distinction between Europe as a place versus a set of ideas has direct bearing on the question of Eurocentrism. In a literal sense, Eurocentrism is the habit of regarding Europe as the global center and seeing European space and time as measures for other parts of the world. This involves constructing a particular view of Europe and then using this as a model for non-Europe. European space is valued above other regions of the earth. In conjunction with this, Europe's past becomes equated with the present time of other places, while its present is made the expected future for others. Spatiotemporal Eurocentrism is a major component of modern European and American imperial ideologies and still holds sway in popular opinion in most parts of the world. However, this form of Eurocentrism has been criticized intensively in academic circles since the 1960s. This has led to the criticism of academic and popular Orientalism and movements such as postcolonial and subaltern studies.<sup>2</sup>

The critique of spatiotemporal Eurocentrism has brought out a deeper aspect that has to do with Europe as an idea that permeates and governs structures of knowledge (e.g., Cohn 1996). The spatiotemporal variety posits relationships in which a center is deemed superior to its presumed peripheries. Although these relationships are ideological constructs born of particular times and places, they can reify into unquestioned, self-evident premises that act as foundations for further thought and action. As anti-colonial philosophical work and the continuing appraisal of Orientalism have shown, modern academic work on non-European

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2     Apart from my discussion here, it is noteworthy that in recent scholarship, the epistemological novelty of modernity has been investigated with respect to European intellectual history as well. Bruno Latour's many works may be considered emblematic of this vein of academic literature.

societies is fundamentally Eurocentric in this vein, even when it contains no mention of European space and time. The centrality of the European gaze is encoded within the presumption that modern »scientific« observation is a neutral rather than value-laden enterprise. Eurocentric discourses on non-Europe are self-authenticating in that they preclude acknowledging the observers' sociopolitical positionality while, simultaneously, claiming objectivity with respect to the topic. To be operational as an epistemological structuring principle, Eurocentrism does not require its upholders to identify as Europeans. As discussed later in this essay, Eurocentrism has been a crucial enabling condition for ideologies explicitly opposed to European cultural and political hegemony.

I come to the question of Eurocentrism as someone whose professional work has focused largely on the premodern intellectual and social history of Asia and the Middle East. I spend most of my time reading materials in non-European languages, composed by authors who knew little or nothing of the region that is now called Europe. They also could not have had the slightest inkling of the »modern« material transformations we regard as having emanated from European societies. And yet, Eurocentrism is intrinsic to my reading, thinking, and expression because it is part of the intellectual scaffolding that makes my work possible. This is reflected in the most basic form in the fact that I write in English. It is relevant at a deeper level as well, with respect to what questions I ask of the materials and how my work fits within an established discourse centered in Euro-American institutions. While regarding all this to be true beyond any doubt, I do not consider the situation to be a source for despondency or an indictment that ought to lead to intellectual self-exorcism. Instead, I believe acknowledging the pervasiveness of Eurocentrism at the level of ideas invites reflection on processes and politics that undergird the production of knowledge under all circumstances.

In my view, Eurocentrism is neither something mysterious or conspiratorial nor a form of corruption that needs a counter-polemic. Rather, it denotes a non-homogenous set of ideas and practices that pervade the material and discursive worlds we inhabit and ought to invite dense analysis for purposes of greater self-awareness. Instead of ignoring or countervailing

Eurocentric knowledges, we can treat them as contingent representations that work on specific premises and have intelligible conditions of possibility and change. Analyzing Eurocentrism is then synonymous with a commitment to engaging critically with the disciplines and topical arenas that define our work.

My purview in this article is the question of history of Islam, meaning the pattern for narrating the Islamic past that has become normative in modern academic work. As recent detailed studies have shown, the form of historical writing that we consider the »real« past today evolved out of specific intellectual dispositions that came to the fore in Europe in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (e.g., Fasolt 2004; Schiffman 2011). Over time, in conjunction with the establishment of global European dominance in political and intellectual affairs, this pattern became naturalized and worked to disestablish earlier and alternative modes of understanding the past (cf. Grafton 2007). Later in this discussion, I provide the details for Gottlieb W. Leitner (1840–1899) and Jurji Zaidan (1861–1914), whose writings symptomize the process of creating a new historical understanding of Islam in the nineteenth century, congruent with the general transformation of the notion of history. I focus on the generative capacity of the phrase »Islamic civilization,« a notion that allowed these authors to incorporate materials pertaining to Islam in their understandings of global history. As I see it, Islamic civilization is a thoroughly Eurocentric idea in the sense that it pictures Islam in the mold of categories that originated in modern Europe but have come to be projected as universally applicable frames for comprehending the global past, present, and future. Appreciating the Eurocentric basis for turning data pertaining to »Islam« into »Islamic civilization« identifies the burdens imposed by the civilizational framing. This can, eventually, improve our ability to recast the relevant materials to create new understandings of the Islamic past as well as other cases with structural similarities.

My discussion emphasizes two interrelated points. The first is that, in the consideration of Eurocentrism, we can show Eurocentric thought to have been the source of discourses explicitly opposed to European intellectual and political hegemony. The men I discuss—one of European

and the other of Lebanese origins—saw themselves as championing the cause of Islam and the Arabs. We have no reason to doubt the sincerity of their stated commitments in this regard. The cases urge us to resist easy conflation between European intellectual constructs and the activities of European individuals and states aimed at dominating the world. Ideas always connect to sociopolitical developments via attenuated pathways that need substantiation through specific parsing rather than presumed complete interdependence. To relate this issue to the example with which I began, we can say that, even as it replicates a structure in Paris, the Eiffel Tower in Lahore is a monument that displaces European hegemony by domesticating the Tower's monumentality and significance to a scene in South Asia. In Pakistan, the desirability of seeing the Eiffel Tower and acquiring status through the aura it casts are matters indexed not to Paris but to the neighborhood in Lahore where the replica is located.

My second major point is that the significance of Eurocentrism in the thought of the two authors I consider can matter for current academic work in the humanities and the social sciences. Eurocentrism's domesticability that my cases highlight is an intellectual resource for us to look beyond a purely agonistic way to consider Eurocentrism. Our work, which we can acknowledge as being foundationally Eurocentric, need not be coextensive with Euro-American political and intellectual hegemony. Although we remain bound to conceptual and discursive schemes that began in Europe, origins do not determine historical trajectories. In fact, our intellectual heritage includes not just ideas of European origin, but also the indigenization and radical transformation of these ideas in countless forms all over the world during the past two centuries. Furthermore, the intellectual resources we rely on for our work do not predetermine the choices we must make when we decide to pursue certain topics over others and take positions on them that affect the environments in which we live.

Acknowledging Eurocentrism as a historically contingent, demystified fact underlying our work can be a source of freedom to imagine the future. Seeing how this process worked for predecessors such as the two men whose work I highlight can help us to become comfortable with our limitations as human subjects operating in complex worlds that contain

inescapable strictures as well as emancipatory possibilities. In this vein, describing the problems of conceiving Islam as a civilization in a Eurocentric mold helps to free us to imagine new ways of interpretation. The Eiffel Towers found in Paris, Lahore, and many other places in the world are significant structures that invite interpretation. What we are to do with them—how to interpret them and which to consider more or less significant—is a matter of intellectual and ethical choice that is not dictated purely by the fact that an Eiffel Tower first came to exist in Paris in 1889.

### **Imagining Islamic history in nineteenth-century India**

Gottlieb Wilhelm Leitner was born in Pest (Hungary) in 1840 and died in Bonn (Germany) in 1899. A small monument over his grave, in the Brookwood Cemetery outside of London, contains two statements that characterize his life's passions. At the top, in English, it states »The Learned are Honoured in their Work,« and the bottom has, in Arabic, »Knowledge is Better than Wealth« (*al-'ilm kbayr min al-mal*).<sup>3</sup> The latter statement, in a script unusual for a Victorian graveyard in Britain, references Leitner's eventful life outside of Europe. Born with the surname Sapier, he spent his early years in Istanbul and became known as Leitner after being adopted by a stepfather who worked as a doctor in the Ottoman Empire. Of Jewish origins, he stated his religion as Anglican at the time of naturalization as a British citizen in 1861. He spent much of his life championing Islam and Muslims before European audiences and readerships.

Possessing extraordinary capacity for learning languages, Leitner is claimed to have been fluent in 15 as a teenager and to have acquired 50 over the course of his life. His career is full of extraordinary achievements. He was appointed translator to the British commissariat in Istanbul, with honorary rank of colonel, at the age of 15. Appointed the first professor of »Arabic with Mohammedan Law« at King's College, London, at 21, he became dean of the oriental department at 24 (King's College Archive 1864). For 15 years (1864–79), he served as the first non-military principal

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3 »Gottlieb Leitner Grave Brookwood,« Wikimedia Commons, October 17, 2016, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Gottlieb\\_Leitner\\_Grave\\_Brookwood.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Gottlieb_Leitner_Grave_Brookwood.jpg).

of Government College, Lahore, British India, during which time he also spearheaded the successful movement to raise the funds to start a university in the Punjab, also convincing the colonial government to allow this to happen. Upon return to Europe, he founded an institute for learning oriental languages in Woking, England, whose grounds included the first purpose-built mosque in Britain. Leitner's personality is captured in a biographer's statement that while »some regarded him as headstrong, wilful, and conceited, few questioned his energy or intellectual competence« (Rubinstein 2004).

During his eventful 15 years in Lahore, Leitner collaborated with Indian scholars interested in European methods and knowledge, regarding them as intellectual equals at a higher level than was the habit of other Europeans. Even as he minimized the significance of the Indians' work for his own claims, he did not portray them as mere »native informants« whose utility was limited to basic translation (Diamond 2011, 36–38).<sup>4</sup> In the effort to establish a new Indian university in Lahore, Leitner's insistence that Indian languages be taught and utilized as pedagogical vehicles set him apart from other British officials. His stance on this issue even went against the views of prominent Indians, such as Sir Syed Ahmed Khan (d. 1898), who believed that the inculcation of English and a clear break from the past were necessary for sociopolitical betterment of the Muslims of India ('Amir 2004, 32–35). Leitner's interest in law was instrumental in institutionalizing Islamic and Hindu law as official subjects in the new university that led to the conferral of titles *maulvi* and *pandit*, respectively, on graduates. His correspondence with officers in the highest echelons of the colonial government helped to establish Muslim legal experts (*qazis*) as colonial officials, emulating a pattern that Leitner had known from his experience in the Ottoman Empire (Ivermee 2014, 1082–85; Allender 2006, 168–72).

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4 Leitner's most prominent local literary collaborator in Lahore, whom he seems to have held in high esteem, was Muhammad Husain Azad (d. 1910), a major intellectual and literary figure in nineteenth-century India. For details of Azad's work with Leitner, including on *Sinin-i Islam*, see Sadiq 1965, 24–26, 131–35; and Pritchett 1994, 31–33.

Leitner's obsession with linguistic specificity colored most of his projects, sometimes leading to irresolvable contradictions. On one hand, he was a connoisseur of languages, acquiring facility with more and more throughout his life. On the other, he also believed in a universal scale for measuring the worth of cultures, societies, and religions that he understood as the overall framework for human existence. For the first side, he emphasized high proficiency in idiomatic usage that could be appreciated only if one learned a particular language. His criticism of the way Europeans approached the cultures and societies that mattered to him reflects this investment, as in the following statement:

The East is now often misrepresented by europeanized specimens, as England is flooded with the writings of popularity-seekers, whose knowledge of English and English audiences constitutes the real secret of their reputation as Orientalists. These publications have often diverted intending students from Oriental research in its original languages, which is the only road to Oriental learning. The public is satisfied with diluted and distorted information obtained at second-hand from those whose aim, in this age of hurry, is »to get on« not »to know« or to impart a linguistic knowledge that would destroy the rule of the one-eyed among the blind. (Leitner 1893, 374)

Leitner's exclusivist attitude, which would have required every European working in places like India to be an expert in multiple languages, was a source of friction with the colonial government. Particularly in areas such as primary and secondary level education, Leitner's purist attitude was deemed impractical and inappropriate to further colonial causes like the expansion of literacy (Allender 2007, 392–93).

Toward the end of his stay in Lahore, Leitner worked with an Indian scholar to produce a two-volume history of Islam in Urdu meant as a tool to teach scholars who would be employed as teachers in public institutions. Leitner's introduction to this work, written in English, reveals the Eurocentrism of his epistemological presumptions despite his avowed insistence on the significance of non-European vernaculars. After registering his deep admiration for the linguistic knowledge of Indian Muslim religious

professionals (*maulvis*), he laments their lack of historical sense, leading up to the impetus behind the authorship of his book:

It, no doubt, was necessary to inform Maulvis that the History of Arabia had a chronological and well-ascertained sequence which did not allow them to consign it to the age of fable, however advantageous such a course might be in stimulating the sense of the reverence for the distant or unknown... [and] to impress the Maulvi with the conviction that the history of his country, creed or literature was merely a part of the Universal History of human events and thoughts. I, therefore, became anxious to point out how Arabian History had grown into that of Muhammadanism, and how its Literature had influenced the various populations professing that creed. I also endeavored to show what place the History of Muhammadanism has in the Universal History of civilization. (Leitner 1871, 1–2)

Following the short English introduction, the bulk of Leitner's *Sinin-i Islam* (The Annals of Islam) consists of a linear timeline for Islam, from Arabia before Muhammad to the states dominant over the Middle East at the time of writing. This »history« reproduces in easy Urdu what was, by Leitner's time, becoming the standard European representation of the Islamic past. As I have argued elsewhere, this version of the Islamic past derived from a selective reading of Islamic literatures concerned with the past, with overwhelming emphasis on political structures such as dynasties, empires, and states (Bashir 2014, 519–30). Moreover, it anchored Islam in the Middle East, making places such as India, where Leitner was located, peripheral to the history. His claim that Indian Muslims did not know their history is an absurdity at face value given the long list of works concerned with the Islamic past composed in India for eight centuries prior to Europeans' arrival in the subcontinent. Furthermore, Leitner's collaborators, such as Muhammad Husain Azad (d. 1910), were busy assessing these materials for the current social and intellectual needs of India's Muslims in the late nineteenth century. Even though aware of this literature, Leitner would not have considered it »Islamic history« because of his presumed, Eurocentric understanding of Islam as a »civilization« anchored perennially in the Middle East.

Leitner's argument that, brilliant as they may be, Indian Muslim professionals needed guidance from European scholars like him was rooted in his investment in the notion of a universal civilization. In this view, the world has a single continuous history that has, ultimately, led to one part of the world, namely Europe, pulling »ahead« of others. What Europeans possess most of all is the sense of history, which arranges all data about the past in the correct order. Treasures to be found in non-European languages must be appreciated on their own, as we can find Leitner insisting throughout his publications (Leitner 2002). But modern European frames are necessary to bring out the true value and measure of these materials. The method advocated in Leitner's work is thus based on a thoroughly Eurocentric epistemology, which he wishes to put into service for glorifying Islam, India, and all other matters non-European. This is the position we see reiterated throughout his work directed at Europeans as well as non-Europeans.

### **Eurocentrism as nativist pride**

My second case in this article is Jurji Zaidan (1861–1914), a man of Lebanese, Greek Orthodox origin who was among the most widely published and read authors in Arabic at the end of the long nineteenth century. Zaidan began his higher education as a medical student in the Syrian Protestant College in Beirut (which later became the American University in Beirut), soon moving to a career in writing and publishing aimed at Arab societal and cultural rejuvenation. He migrated to Egypt in 1882, eventually becoming regarded as a major proponent of the movement known as the Arab renaissance (*nahda*). Having learned French, English, and German, he spent his life producing literature, in both fiction and non-fiction, in a distinctively modern literary idiom in Arabic (Philipp 2010, 21–34; Dupont 2006).

The fact that Zaidan's works spoke to issues of the day, with self-conscious attention to newness and reform, won him a significant popular audience in the Arab world and other parts of Africa and Asia through the circulation of the journal *al-Hilal* (The Crescent). But the contemporary topicality of his work also compelled authoritative stakeholders of domains he engaged to oppose him. As a Christian who criticized church authorities and glorified Islamic figures as great heroes of the Arab past, he ran afoul of his core-

igionists. Although admired by ordinary Muslims for making Islamic stories accessible, he was censured by Muslim religious authorities as an outsider infringing on their domain. His use of European sources to tell Arab and Muslim stories could be seen as acquiescing to foreigners (Dupont 2013, 108–18). But a European reviewer of his work on pre-Islamic Arabs faulted him for not paying enough attention to European scholars' critique of Arabic sources, also expressing the hope that Zaidan's work would eventually lead his readers to consult the more correct work of European scholars of Arabic and Islam (Margoliouth 1909, 499).

In all these cases, Zaidan's habit of crossing established boundaries between communities and discursive domains was a source of both popularity and rebuke. In the long run, Zaidan's greatest source of fame and revenue were his novels, of which he published 22 between 1891 and 1914 (Philipp 2010, 420–26; Starkey 2013). All but one of these novels treated historical topics, turning selective information culled from pre-modern sources into narratives with protagonists and villains of the type found in modern European literatures. Published repeatedly in Arabic up to this day, these novels have been translated into numerous languages and have affected the development of a new literary idiom even in other languages such as Persian (Rastegar 2007).

As in the case of Leitner, Zaidan's work is based squarely and self-consciously on Eurocentric epistemological principles and narrative patterns, while arguing for the rights and value of non-Europeans. His primary mechanism to make this work was, again, the notion of »civilization« as the concept could be understood in a modern European frame. This perspective is at the forefront in the five-volume *Ta'rikh al-tamaddun al-Islami* (History of Islamic civilization), his major non-fiction work on Islamic history published in parts between 1902 and 1906. The mold for the work is set according to the following definition:

The discussion of the civilization of a community includes considering what it comprises of with respect to extent of dominion, greatness, and wealth. And description of what is included in its culture regarding the provisions of development and its fruits. In this history is included knowledge, literature, and crafts, together with their

concomitants such as schools, colleges, and universities, and the expansiveness of the purview of the state and its functionaries and the ease of life these bring to it. And what is the extent of the effects of these on its collective life, which requires description of the community's habits, societal manners, political patterns, and the imprint of these in its resources and motivations. (Zaidan 1902, 1:9)

The criteria for measuring societies laid out here are generic, applicable to all human groups. This fact belies Zaidan's investment in considering human »civilizations« as constituting a single »Civilization« extending through all time.

Although allowing everyone to participate in a universal Civilization, Zaidan's point of view followed the work of European predecessors in placing ethnicities, religions, and language groups on a ladder based on a sense of differentiated development. The key operationalizing principle here, for the understanding of the history of languages, ethnicities, and religions, was the modern theory of evolution: »Indeed, all of Zaidan's views on social reform and pedagogy were influenced by social evolutionary ones« (Elshakry 2013, 137). His commitment in this regard can be traced to his initial exposure to modern medicine, instantiating an intellectual journey running from »pathology to philology« (Dayeh 2016). This idea worked for his sociopolitical aims because it acknowledged European superiority while also insisting that others, such as Arabs and Muslims, were part of the same scheme. They simply needed to evolve a little more to become fully developed in the manner of Europeans. Notably, this perspective has remained the basis for the arrangement of international relations all the way into the twenty-first century.

While Zaidan's investment in evolutionary concepts exalted Europeans above others, the final picture in his works is not a straightforward case of wishing that everyone becomes like the Europeans of his day. Most of his knowledge of Europe and things European was derived from reading, giving his characterizations a bookish and idealizing cast. In 1912, two years before his death at the relatively young age of 53, he made a journey to France, England, and Switzerland and subsequently published a short account of his experiences. Nearly three-quarters of this work is dedicated

to France (mostly Paris), followed by an extended description of England and a short note on Switzerland. He provides details of matters such as government structures, economic output, and employment status of citizens, matters that he could have described easily without undertaking the trip. The descriptions of museums, palaces, churches, neighborhoods, and the mores of European men and women seem more personalized, although even here he could have relied on previous accounts, which are more detailed than what we find in his work.

As stated in the beginning of the work, his ultimate concern was not to give a detailed account of Europe but to identify what can be learned from life there to improve his own society. Around the middle of the work, he presents a summary of his assessment on this score that runs as follows:

In French and other European civilizations, there are many good things that we ought to adopt and utilize. But these have evils [too] that we ought to shun and make distant. The good things, whose adoption is praiseworthy, are: 1. Knowledge of what is incumbent; 2. Keeping time and honoring appointments; 3. Proper public manners through correct training; 4. Women's education and cultural refinement; 5. Educational advancement and enlargement of literatures; 6. Work and diligence. As for the most important among the filth of this civilization, which we must reject: 1. Overabundance of freedom and its misplaced use; 2. What conflicts with Eastern decency, except that which provides knowledge and training to the extent that it accords with our habits; 3. Lassitude regarding religious belief and candid expression of unbelief, because that is the foundation of that corruption. (Zaidan 2002, 51)

The upshot of this statement is that, in terms of the overall evolutionary scale, Europeans were ahead in some matters and behind in others. Looking to them thus required discriminating carefully between admirable versus reprehensible traits.

Zaidan's presumed moral superiority of »Eastern« people is evident in many works in addition to the travelogue of Europe. This pervasive attribute of his output detracts from him being regarded as an admirer of things

European pure and simple. But his justification for making the moral distinction is the general idea of human Civilization, which feeds into his thought through his voracious assimilation of European literatures and philosophies. His thought then becomes a case of Eurocentric ideas being used to condemn European cultures and civilization in favor of non-Europeans. This is a dynamic familiar to us from much anticolonial and postcolonial thought. Its significance for the present discussion lies in the fact that we can identify »civilization« as the key term that is operating to argue for the equivalence between Europeans and non-Europeans while also creating hierarchical distinctions between them that differ based on whether the topic is sociopolitical ascendancy or moral superiority.

### Conclusion

In the four decades since its publication, Edward Said's book *Orientalism* has been a touchstone for the critique of Eurocentrism. Said's particular concern in that and a number of other books was the Euro-American understanding of the Middle East in specific. When asked about the book's impact ten years after its publication, he registered disappointment and said that the field that had been the main target had been affected the least. Said's explanation for this seemingly surprising fact connected to Islam:

Central to Orientalism in the Middle Eastern instance is Islam. You can't study the Orient without dealing with Islam. For many Orientalists of past and even present generations, Islam is a deeply antipathetic and repulsive phenomenon. [...] Every imperialist phenomenon resembles every other one, yet every one is quite different. How much is generic to imperialism? It could be a form of paranoia on my part, but it does seem to me that the Orientalism I was speaking of contains a unique set of attitudes, a kind of virulence and persistence that I haven't seen elsewhere. African studies have changed in fairly massive ways in the 20th century; Indian studies have changed; Latin American studies have changed. Orientalism has a remarkable holding power, supported by the media and popular discourse, in which Arabs and Muslims and terrorism

and evil are all wrapped up together. There is a very powerful compactness that I don't find anywhere else. («Orientalism Revisited» 1988)

Said's work has been discussed extensively in both frivolous and serious ways, including substantive critique pertaining to its premises and conclusions (e.g., Ahmad 1994; Varisco 2007). In the vein of criticism, one could (as scholars have) counter his perspective by bringing up figures like Gottlieb Leitner, who held a positive and appreciative view of Islam even as they identified as orientalists. To add to this, someone like Jurji Zaidan can be used to show that Middle Easterners themselves participated heavily in the production of Eurocentric discourses on Arabs and Islam. While they urge nuance, such corrections to Said's viewpoint do not diminish the general force of his argument that there is something special about the way Arabs and Islam get portrayed in Euro-American contexts. One just has to pick up a newspaper most days to be confronted by this fact.

Based on the preceding discussion, I suggest that we should look to issues connected to concepts of »history« and »civilization« to unpack the »powerful compactness« of Western discourses that suspect and condemn Islam, Muslims, and related subjects. Our way into a demystification of the power of orientalism runs through analyses of Eurocentrism at the granular level. When we evaluate the works of authors such as Leitner and Zaidan with respect to epistemology, rather than focusing solely on explicit representation, we see a complex enmeshing between Eurocentrism and the praise and condemnation of Europeans as well as groups such as Arabs, Indians, and Muslims. This is work that is necessary if we wish to counter discriminatory and prejudicial aspects of Eurocentrism. Critique of Eurocentrism may be counterproductive if it creates other, similarly problematic discourses such as Islamocentrism. The task is undertaken better if it leads to dismantling concepts such as civilization that appear as analytical prisons in the work of our predecessors. Rather than doing

*away* with Eurocentrism, doing *more* with is a better bet for the future of humanistic and social scientific inquiry.<sup>5</sup>

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5 The work of Abdallah Laroui contains a particularly important account of the problems of using civilization as a historiographical category. For a summary assessment, see Riecken (2015).

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