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Religion and Orientalism Across Borders: A Global Dialogue

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| **ABSTRACT**

This paper aims to navigate profoundly how Orientalism, as a Western portrayal of the "East," frames international relations in the light of the religion resurgence. It zooms out these Western perceptions to understand their impact on the process of policy-making and identity formation. Meanwhile, it also discusses the growing and significant role of religion in world affairs by focusing on how it might either enhance or challenge prevailing power structures. By critically analyzing these interconnections, this article helps to examine and, hence, comprehend the perplexities of negotiating religion and Orientalism in today's globalized world. Ultimately this promotes further respectful and collaborative international relationships. In this sense, drawing on Edward Said's work in Orientalism, this paper paves the way to a new vision of voicing the voiceless Other in the context of religious standards that impede not only Western but any sort of misrepresentation. At the same time, it analyzes how religion comes into play as a socio-political force and a site of contestation. This reveals the multifaceted nature of its effect in bridging political gaps and fostering more understanding among the West and East through reinforcing existing local power dynamics or challenging them. Consequently, it demonstrates that religious identities, political ideologies, and orientalist narratives can come into interplay to mirror how the nexus between contrasting elements might offer an insight into multicultural dialogue and peacemaking.

1. Introduction

Throughout the last century, Eastern human beings have been portrayed as inferior, backward, and marginalized others that are liable to be ruled and manipulated. This Western image of Eastern indigenous individuals has largely affected both local and international power relations which makes it sometimes difficult to fully bridge gaps and ensure mutual respect and understanding between the Orient and the Occident. In this sense, this paper intends to explore this systematic depiction of the Other in literature, media, and art. It is about how to reframe Western-Eastern interpersonal relations in the light of the revolving globalized world wherein individuals are aware of the political game each side plays, especially with the increasing need for cross-cultural exchange, coexistence, and cooperation to go over numerous shared stumbling blocks. That is to say, instead of fragmenting the world into West and East, wise voices have to adopt new visions that focus more on how to cope with social, economic, and cultural obstacles that impede collaborative work in both short and long terms. These visions have to go beyond regional interests to promote universal cooperation, mutual respect, and cultural exchange.

Otherwise, visions of superiority and control will continue to be perpetuated through literature, media, and travel narratives. These tools are mostly known for being used purposefully to target particular cultural groups and then reconstruct their cultural identities and orientations. As a result of this systematic policy, many power structures have flourished within former colonies due to inheriting binary oppositional orientations. Accordingly, this study aims to question the validity of this thought and challenge its

ideology in light of the growing self-awareness of people across the world regarding how these power imbalances can affect not only the Eastern world but also the West via unmasking some double standards related to the freedom, equality, and equity. In this sense, religion is brought out into the table to investigate the extent to which it can align with the previously mentioned thought, depending on the role it may play in this concern. This study shows that religion can somehow play a crucial role in either supporting or challenging power structures, depending on the context and how it is interpreted and implemented.

In an attempt to understand the interconnected nature of religion and Orientalism within the increasingly revolving world, this article represents a critical quest of analysis to find out how religion can come into play as a socio-political force and a site of contestation. Pondering deeply about the nuanced interconnections between these two notions unravels the blurred vision rooted in negotiating their intersections. Through this examination, clear perspectives about the challenges and opportunities in today's changing world come to the surface. This examination is based on creating an in-between space that allows peaceful dialogue, collaborative work, and positive involvement on both local and international levels. It is concluded that understanding the way religious teachings and orientalist thought intersect can tremendously help in nurturing the development of harmonious and beneficial interconnections across cultural borders. Not only that, but it can also highly facilitate bridging gaps, rectifying the distorted image of the marginalized Other, and representing the local literature appropriately.

2. Notion of the Other: A Simple Quest to Understand the Other's Portrayal

In order to critically engage in examining how the "Other" has been portrayed in the available mediums, especially media and travel narratives, there should be some sort of both individual reflection and broader social engagements via interrogating people or analyzing the previously tackled knowledge in this concern. In this sense, self-education is the key to understanding the entire range of relevant issues and engaging appropriately with diverse sources of information. Hence, gaining the needed nuanced comprehension regarding the interplay between identity and culture and how targeting the latter may deeply impact the local power structures to perpetuate the imbalance. Accordingly, there is a reciprocal effect between identity construction and culture in the sense that people who feel a strong sense of belonging and citizenship would certainly struggle to preserve their native cultural determinants and resist any subversive discourse that intends to change who they are or where they belong. Here, the Other is mirrored by the acts of struggling and resistance in relation to another human that is the dominant. In this context, one has to be rational and acknowledge that binary oppositions are inherited within any social group all over the globe. They pass down from generation to generation not only as a colonial legacy but also as structural hierarchies that stem from rejecting the Other for being different. It is a universal dilemma that normally exists everywhere over the globe, and colonialism reinforces its effect via creating more divisions and disparities among indigenous people. It also reframes the concept while focusing on the colonized by mirroring him or her as an inferior other susceptible to being dominated or subjugated.

In this sense, the Other can be any marginalized or excluded person for predetermined and logically meaningless reasons regardless of whether s/he is in the West or the East. Pondering deeply about this issue, one may notice that this distinction has always been one of the problems that some humans experienced throughout history. That is to say, neither the place nor the time matters, and it is all about the idea that a given individual is treated unfairly. This is where orientalism and religion diverge as the latter not only approaches the notion of the Other more broadly but also rejects viewing a human being as backward or inferior because of his or her ethnicity, language, skin color, or something similar. Orientalism focuses on geographical spaces and how perceptions affect individuals' lives due to belonging to certain geographical locations. Religion, on the other hand, dictates that humans are all equal, and differences in terms of place, skin color, ethnicity, and other human specificities should never be a criterion to divide them into categories or even marginalize them. In contrast, orientalism is about how the East, as geographical circles where people of color reside, is entirely depicted as inferior, which seems like painting the whole universe with the same brush. This kind of generalization cannot be a reason-based idea and it reflects the incapability to distinguish between human relationships and the power relations based on demonizing certain social groups to justify the dominance. This vision should be dismissed to understand that each individual has his/her own specificities and privileges regardless of his or her geographical position around the world. On the contrary, religion values people and deals with each person individually before categorizing him or her based on piety, ethics, and positive engagement within his/her social circles. While orientalism, as a mode of thought, sees people through the lens of stereotypes based on bias and distinction, religion dismisses the vision of reducing humans to mere skin color, gender, ethnicity, or social position they occupy in society. However, both religion and oriental thought can interplay to foreground the idea that a human being can be dehumanized for certain contradictory reasons. Thus, wherever oppression, marginalization, or exclusion is exercised, there exists the Other. This is the rational idea that we need to rely on while dealing with this notion. Regardless of his or her geographical location around the world, there is always a human being that is oppressed and excluded, and most of the time, for being different or having different backgrounds. In other words, rendering natural differences into a sort of power dynamics is the main reason behind excluding and marginalizing people. Here, one needs to know that voicing the voiceless Other means caring about the oppressed as a human honored by his or her creator.

Therefore, in order to understand profoundly what the Other is, a person needs to first examine the process of othering and how it works. This latter is normally an act of classifying people based on certain criteria according to which people are categorized or classified into two hierarchal groups: "Us and Them." That is to say, the existence of the Other is related to that of the Self, and vice versa. Accordingly, differences are the social fuel of the process of Otherness, and the latter always reinforces the power imbalance within any given society. In this sense, only the dominant has the upper hand to dictate the nature of their interrelationship, which is a sort of detraction of the Other's particularities and perspectives. This systematic process of creating interconnections between people emphasizes the idea that the Other can be everywhere, regardless of her or his geographical location and ethnicity. In other words, this classification could probably take place even within the same society or social groups, and there is always an excuse for doing so. That is to say, the process of otherness is an ongoing endless act of distinction and classification based on rendering natural differences into a sort of power dynamics, which is a prevailing strategy wittingly or unwittingly used everywhere all over the world. Unfortunately, the negative connotative meaning of the Other does not change, as it always conveys a sense of marginalization, exclusion, and inferiority. To put it differently, if the other man is a woman, and if the other white man is a black man, the opposite is not true (Beauvoir, 1952; Fanon, 1963). This implies that the powerful is the one who has the upper hand to forge the Other and dictates his or her position in the world.

Having discussed the previously mentioned elements, it is obvious that conceptualizing the Other has nothing to do with fragmenting the world into the West and the Rest. It should not involve focusing only on one particular part of the globe, as if the other part of the world is made up of identical versions of the Self. Therefore, dealing with the notion of the "Other" can vary largely depending on the adopted approach or on the lens through which it is seen and described. Ultimately, what matters in this study is to refrain from framing people based on their geographical location or any other physical aspects regarding their skin color, shape, or something similar. Tackling the notions of the Other and Self in the light of Orientalism needs to be overlooked, dismissed, or at least wisely analyzed to rectify the already perpetuated image in this concern.

3. How Can Religion Enhance or Challenge Existing Power Structures?

To begin with, Concepts of religion and power structures can largely overlap because those who embrace a particular religious belief can be the ones who shape these dynamics. Role of religion in this context is multifaceted, and it depends on whether the religion is wisely adopted or it is used merely as a tool to justify or validate specific positions in the social hierarchy within a particular geographical area. Unfortunately, religion can sometimes be weaponized to achieve political gains because "vast majority of people around the world are religious" (Hackett & McClendon, 2017). It is well-known that some individuals in positions of power exploit ordinary people's good intentions, if the expression fits here, to assert themselves and normalize their social, economic, and political visions. Most of the time their plans are based on their interpretation of religion that fits their interests, regardless of whether it is valid or not. Unfortunately, this has profound and dangerous implications for society members, as it can reshape their thinking in ways that do not serve the normal purposes of their social circles. Unaware of the negative impact of this act on both personal and collective levels, individuals can misuse religion to normalize something illegal that aligns with their personal gains. Religion should be embraced as a source of patience, compassion, love, mutual understanding, and respect rather than as an ideology that forces people to adopt a perspective that may lead to extremism or moral perversion. Unfortunately, both outcomes fail to serve the true purpose of religion, which is to fashion merciful individuals who care about others regardless of the differences and backgrounds. For example, in the Holy Quran, the Prophet Muhammad (peace and prayer be upon him) is described as a mercy to the worlds, meaning the entire creatures: "وما أرسلناك إلا رحمة للعالمين"[1]

Therefore, sacred scriptures can be misused in an attempt to achieve personal gains which has nothing to do with the spirit of religion. However, religion can also be adopted to promote fairness, equality, justice, and mutual respect among people both locally and globally when it is employed to ensure peace, collaborative work, and collective engagement in positive social change. That is to say, it can actively promote certain political systems for being the moral authority that links people morally, socially, and institutionally and hence fosters more inclusivity and social cohesion. This natural role of religion can largely align with some political systems in the sense of encouraging collective work social cohesion and hence bringing people together under the same rule. In this context, it became intertwined with the political process and maintaining power (Maoz & Henderson,2020). This demonstrates how religion can come into play as a socio-political force to foster inclusivity and collective engagement in the community. Hence, understanding religion and power dynamics accurately as separate concepts that can intersect is essential to facilitate better life conditions and promote collective flourishing. Ultimately, the two contrasting ways of using religion make it a set of contestations as it can be misused in a way to serve certain goals and purposes that can reinforce particular imbalanced power structures while it is supposed to be employed for its normal aims in promoting social cohesion, cooperation, and so many other noble goals.

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[1] And We have not sent you, [O Muhammad], except as a mercy to the worlds." (Quran: 21:106-107). The term worlds, here, means the entire creatures and this shows the universal mercy of the prophet peace and prayer be up on him.

Accordingly, deciphering how hierarchies function is an integral part of what a person needs to know in order to be able to understand a particular society. This includes how this society works and the norms it adopts in its public lifestyle. This comprehension facilitates knowing whether religion is integrated into its social framework or not, along with the extent to which it can play an important role within that society. It is not an easy task, and it necessitates being well-versed in the broader context surrounding the religion of that geographical circle. This is certainly to avoid confusion or misunderstandings that might perpetuate certain ideologies. Concerning politics, it is difficult to understand how religion influences decision-making and political strategies. It often seems strange to relate religion to politics, as the latter is largely seen as a typical game of personal gains. Contrarily, religion aims to strengthen social cohesion within the community and advocate for equal treatment of all individuals regardless of their backgrounds and position within the social group. This contrast highlights the difficulty of integrating two seemingly opposing elements in the same act. That is why it is difficult to conclude a clear vision of the role religion might play in politics in today's globalized world in light of misusing religious teachings to achieve personal gains. This observation can easily be made throughout numerous societies around the world. That is to say, in these contexts, religion becomes a mere useful tool to gain votes, and it is mostly employed in the campaign for elections to manipulate the feelings of citizens targeted in that country or community.

However, religion can profoundly play a distinctive role in challenging or supporting hierarchies, depending on the context. As long as it has that inner spiritual power to shape individuals' opinions and behaviors deeply and positively, it can certainly contribute to creating change to certain extents, depending on the citizens' flexibility to approach their everyday concerns from a religious perspective. Not only that, but even the manner in how religious teachings and thought are introduced to the population can facilitate embracing the intended change or refusing it. Positive social change would not take place overnight; it requires time, effort, and good intentions as well. Each person needs to understand that those power dynamics are based on hierarchal visions, and there should always be one powerful and the other weak which ultimately would reinforce social, economic, and educational disparities. Religion as a set of values has to introduce a counter vision that would successfully play the opposite role by highlighting the natural existence of differences and advocating for the idea that social harmony and acceptance are one of collective life's necessities. People as social creatures would not live fully separate from each other or even create groups based only on similarities with a complete disregard for differences. Besides, these differences, regardless of whether they are social, economic, racial, linguistic, or others, should not be the norm that dictates interrelationships between people both at the micro and macro level.

At this point, people who are seen as backward and inferior based on any sort of distinction have to be voiced, seen, and treated equally to others for their humanity first and for their values, the positive role they play, and their significant contribution to humanity and the world in general. This is how religion would not only question the validity of Western perceptions described as oriental thought but also shake and rectify its ideology while also detecting the structural local oppression. Again, it is not only about the occidental vision of the Other, but religion has to question any sort of injustice, including the local misrepresentation of people within the East. Let's be honest; the issue is not whether these perceptions are framed from a Western perspective or not. The matter is fully about refuting marginalization, exclusion, and deprivation while ensuring equity between the entire members of human mankind. As a matter of fact, these social dilemmas can be exerted over any individual or certain categories of people for certain reasons and everywhere all over the globe. In this sense, the justification for mistreating and misrepresenting people mainly stems from racial, linguistic, social, and cultural differences normally rooted in historical discrimination, elitism, and favoritism. This is because people evaluate themselves depending on how they are perceived in their group (Susskind & Hodges, 2007). Based on this quote, positive and negative feedback can largely affect people and this spotlights the deep effect of social discourse on framing identities. That is why there should be a way to approach differences appropriately and raise awareness about the negative impact of misperceptions on others, especially when they lack faith and confidence.

As a result, one of the favorable solutions needed to address the previously mentioned dilemma is dialogue and informative discussions. Communication can certainly make individuals aware of each other's concerns, particularities, experiences, and life obstacles. Spiritual texts or holy scriptures need to be accurately introduced to ordinary people via media shows or educational systems. In this sense, religion, as a set of moral guidance and thought that can frame each individual's lifestyle, can largely be used to allow a collective and harmonic shared social life. This can strengthen social and cultural ties between people, which consequently encourages social acceptance of the Other and subverts injustice, inequality, and bias. To put it differently, religion, when used appropriately, can question and challenge the validity of existing power structures. As previously mentioned, one of the successful strategies that works well in this regard is organizing dialogue and discussions that aim to raise people's awareness towards the spiritual guidance of religion, which promotes understanding and peace. That is to say, arranging dialogue among different members of society can facilitate cultural perspectives exchange and, hence, bridge gaps. Besides, create media shows that invite specialized scholars who are intellectually capable of dealing with everyday issues from a rational perspective based on religion. Thus, dialogue becomes a necessity both in person and online through media to promote ethical principles, which are supposed to be powerful tools to criticize injustice and people's dehumanization. Nowadays, change is within easy reach, and

individuals can easily share their opinions and attitudes regarding a particular issue of their concern. Obviously, social media is an open and free space for everyone to express themselves about various topics, including stereotypes, cultural bias, and distortions of literature they may encounter. For instance, individuals can actively engage in social media discussion and mainstream media that aim to provide an accurate and inclusive representation of the invisible Other. These platforms have become integral tools for fostering cross-cultural dialogue, promoting social activism, and building online communities (Jansen et al., 2009).

Accordingly, language is another element that should be addressed very well in the sense that it is a factor that might affect the dialogue's purposes in an opposite way. Language is an ingredient of power and can largely serve the supremacy of the dominant. That is to say while engaging in dialogue, linguistic tools or channels of communication should be impartial in a manner that makes the two parties involved in the dialogue linguistically equal. It is extremely rare when cultural perspectives exchange takes part in a context wherein language is not an issue. Normally, whenever dialogue is held to bridge gaps between diverse people, the language of the powerful is largely adopted, which posits the Other in a weak position as s/he keeps struggling to be accepted in another linguistic context that is not her/his native one. Certainly, this creates another sort of power dynamic that brings to the surface how the dominant may impose her/his supremacy indirectly over the Other when the language facilitates the discursive messages or implicit ideologies to come across suspiciously. In this sense, the whole situation leads to the feeling of being not only linguistically but also culturally displaced. This would engender psychological stress and a sense of exclusion or misunderstanding. That is why dialogue should be conducted in the language of the Other to create some balance regarding the linguistic representation of each side and also allow them the linguistic capability to articulate their native cultural issues in a way truly they are without any adaptation or normalization. That is to say, effective communication necessitates using the language that all the participants master to ensure the smooth flow of ideas and thoughts. Besides, translation can largely play a pivotal role in bridging gaps whenever it is needed.

4. Negotiating Religion and Orientalism in Today's Globalized World
To start with, Said argued that orientalism as a mode of thought and representation mirrors the Occident's interests in constructing and maintaining Western dominance over the Eastern people, and this is largely rooted in many mediums that facilitate prejudice, stereotypes, and the exercise of power. It becomes obvious that racism, elitism, and favoritism represent the masked slogan of this thought. Accordingly, Said argues that Eastern religions, particularly Islam, are always mentioned in relation to power, politics, and prejudice. In this sense, Islam is reduced to a doctrine of particular ethnic groups whose culture is largely described negatively through stereotypes. According to Said (2003, p.157), "imagination does play a central role in these generalizations." From a critical discourse analysis point of view, this statement questions the nature and goals of these generalizations stem from fictional ideas. This passage implies that oriental thought depicts Eastern life and realities, including Islam, based on stereotypes without any direct study of its teaching, which remains a mere imagination. Consequently, these portrayals of the religions of the Other, including Islam, are not reason-based or evidence-based.

Throughout the journey of Orientalizing the Orient, literature, art, and media contents have been used to perpetuate the inferiority of the Other's doctrines. They portrayed them as beliefs that illicit hate and exclusion. Studying these perceptions in light of oriental thought can help unravel how religious identities are often politicized and exploited within Occidental discourses. Focusing on analyzing the entire sort of narratives relevant to this issue would decipher the generalized perceptions about religion, which would help in appreciating its real role in supporting the oppressed and advocating for fair affairs. In this sense, knowledge is the unique salvation for both the Orient and the Occident to understand doctrines in more accurate, evidence-based, and meaningful ways. Hence, this would certainly allow us to understand how to distinguish between the different interpretations of religion and filter the suitable and correct one that does not hold any embedded messages that might be intended to serve certain illegitimate interests. This would certainly give the right teaching interpretation the upper hand and lead to respecting religious diversity while mitigating the socio-political manipulation of identities.

Hence, based on what has been previously tackled in this paper, religion and Orientalism can interplay to a certain extent though they mostly diverge in many ways. It is undoubted that each one of them has its specific manner of defining the Other and Orientalism narrows him/her into the Eastern. According to this perspective, while the Other is seen as a human of color and a mere marginalized backward, the Self, on the other hand, is portrayed as having the legitimizing power to manipulate and demonize the Other. According to Said, this vision is highly emphasized in the literature, media, and art. It is a sort of embedded message suspiciously made to reinforce the previously mentioned imbalanced power relation. That is why he used to refer to the stereotypical description of the Other as rooted in producing knowledge that aims to maintain the imbalance between the East and the West. According to him, this description is based on distorting the Other's literature and realities. Besides, this misrepresentation does not reflect any real-based events or situations. Indeed, pondering deeply about this vision of Said, one can think that these descriptions can be the reason behind increasing disagreement and misunderstanding between the two sides. Then, certainly, this will continue to foreground differences and background similarities and hence perpetuate disparities between them.

In this sense, due to the increasingly interconnected global challenges, there is an urge to go beyond the nowadays' divisions and establish tightened connections among people worldwide. In this sense, wise voices need to proclaim mutual respect and understanding among people of diverse cultures, and dialogue has to be the utmost tool in this concern. For instance, scholars from different religious backgrounds, including priests and 'Ulama[2], can play a pivotal role in bridging gaps and ensuring healthy and harmonic international relationships. That is to say, reasonable visions have to be developed about global issues, and cross-cultural communication would largely serve as a useful tool for achieving this goal. This sort of communication has to take into consideration the misrepresentation produced in all kinds of knowledge and the complexity of interactions between people belonging to diverse cultures and religions. This misrepresentation should be seen as a universal phenomenon that targets the marginalized Other regardless of her/his geographical belongings. In this sense, religious dialogue can largely help to establish the essential step toward a further inclusive and respectful global community. Honestly speaking, it is time to start thinking seriously about better ways to go over the unmeaningful approaches according to which people are treated unfairly for being part of a particular region, ethnicity, or community that embraces a certain religion. In this context, binarism needs to be seen as something that is rooted in the dominant's mentality regardless of her/his ethnicity, language, or geographical location, and there is always a particular reason on which this unhealthy social dilemma is based. Yet, most social groups all over the world base their distinctions mainly on differences as an excuse to demonize the different Other.

Accordingly, knowledge has to be the key to create change regarding the illogical manner of classifying people. It is important to shed light on the discursive messages laden in news and literature. This is one of the positive steps to switch the focus to an accurate representation of the Subjugated Other and to make her/him visible through neutral fair tools. Thus, impartial critical perspectives must be developed to frame a new way of salvation from bias, marginalization, and exclusion, which are normally based on despising another human based on her/his language, ethnicity, religion, skin color, gender, or race. Knowledge has to be analyzed and filtered to unravel the implicit ideologies embedded in texts. Most of the time, these ideologies are used to justify the entire sorts of oppression, and analyzing this can help in the ending of this discrimination. Accordingly, the focus must first be on criticizing the dominant's injustice to pave the way to voicing the voiceless Other via rewriting his/her literature to prove that this silenced human can also theorize. The central idea here is to produce a form of knowledge capable of reflecting the inherent relation between thought and action in rectifying the distorted images of the Other. Truly reason-based thought can certainly lead to transformation and create new forms of human activity since it "anticipates a release of emancipatory reflection and a transformed social praxis" (Schroyer 1973: 31)

5. Conclusion
There is no doubt that examining the topic of religion and orientalism across borders is a journey of learning from which numerous points come to intersect, highlighting the complex interplay between Western narratives, religious perspectives, and political ideologies. In the light of oriental thought, Eastern religion is an integral part of the Other's culture and identity, which is mainly depicted as a doctrine that is overlapped with policy, power, and prejudice. Based on this perception, there was a need to approach religion in relation to Western thought as an attempt to rectify its fake portrayal and spotlight its sacred role in bridging gaps and bringing people together from various cultural backgrounds in a complete dismissal of classifying people based on any sort of determinants or criteria including linguistic, ethnic, social and cultural specificities of their places wherein they belong. In addition to that, religion can largely play a crucial role as a socio-political force to enhance certain political or social systems through encouraging inclusivity, collaborative work, and equal engagement in social activities. Based on the merciful meaning and purpose of Islam as one of the Other's religions, social justice, equality, and mutual respect are tremendously advocated for mainly through shows, education, and religious dialogue both in person and online.

Religious dialogue, therefore, becomes a global dialogue in the light of orientalism, or in another way, a cross-cultural communication across borders. In fact, it should be wisely adopted to encourage both intercultural and cross-cultural perspective exchange. From an Eastern perspective, religion can allow spiritual support and psychological aid for those in need of it whenever it is possible and this is either directly or indirectly. In this context, religious scholars are supposed to play their habitual role by engaging in knowledge production via which everyday life is tackled from a faithful vision. This latter vision should be based on an accurate interpretation of religious holy scriptures that is far from any personal or political gains. Religion would certainly create a structured change aiming to establish a coherent and cooperative community. Therefore, explicitly or implicitly, religion would become a socio-political force that could challenge oppression, exclusion, and marginalization. Based on that, religion enhances some political systems that align with this purpose. Similarly, religion can also come into play, as previously mentioned, to promote understanding and acceptance at the international level. Accordingly, orientalism, as a system of thought and religious scriptures, can be examined to understand how the Other is described, critically evaluated, and advocated for.

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[2] Religious scholars in Islam

In other words, negotiating religion in relation to Orientalism means engaging in a sort of critical comparison targeting the underpinning elements of both texts that normally diverge more than intersect. Accordingly, this paper revealed that the two contrasting elements would intersect to give rise to something special which is an in-between space of mutual understanding and respect despite the entire differences that might exist between the West and East. In this sense, this study revealed that analyzing critically the orientalist knowledge regarding how the cultural Other is approached and stereotypically portrayed, along with profoundly understanding the Eastern religious teachings, might offer an insight into multicultural dialogue and peacemaking. Hence, the intersection between the two notions becomes then a global dialogue promoting further respectful and collaborative international relationships.

To sum up, it is important to understand that each one of us is the other of others; however, the focus in this paper has been on the concept of the Other as a human being that is marginalized and excluded. Accordingly, Islam rejects describing people as backward and inferior for being different; humans are not backward or inferior because of their skin color, religion, ethnicity, gender, or geographical belonging. Islam not only honors humans but also forbids racism, exclusion, and marginalization while considering these dilemmas as an act of ignorance. No one chooses his or her skin color, ethnicity, race, or geographical origin, but s/he can choose to be pure, honest, good-hearted, and faithful, and this is what matters. If a human being is incapable of being this way, s/he will always keep clinging to something like skin color, ethnicity, or geographical belonging to prove that s/he is superior while others are not. There is no one superior to another because of the latter mentioned characteristics, and this requires more elaboration while this paper is a mere introduction to the issue under study.

6. Limitations and Suggestions for Further Research

Examining the interplay between Oriental thought and religion in relation to how the Other should be portrayed and critically approached is not an easy task at all. It is a multifaceted and complex endeavor due to the fact that the notion of the Other is related to very sensitive issues. In addition to that, this study should deal with the entire reason behind dividing humans into groups based on their differences that are turned into a sort of power dynamics. Tackling this topic appropriately means covering multiple other relevant elements, such as how to cope with the systematic way of creating division based on differences, the various techniques or strategies needed to ensure the full inclusivity of marginalized and excluded people labeled as Other, and the extent to which the East and West can be brought together into an in-between space of respect and mutual understanding. Besides, it should also deal with how to transcend the epistemic violence to which the literature of the Other is exposed while s/he tries to voice his or her local issues and realities. The most important thing is that the notion of the Other has to be accurately approached as a human that is excluded and categorized as inferior solely for non-reasonable excuses such as being "Different." Geographical location has nothing to do with this classification as the Different is everywhere all over the world. That is to say, this study has to extend the traditional vision of categorizing people, and religious teachings need to come into play to internalize that no one is better than the other just because of being part of a particular social group, geographical belonging, or any other nonsense reasons.

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