

“Orientalism - Western Conceptions of the Orient”

SAID, Edward W.: *Orientalism. Western Conceptions of the Orient.*

New York: Vintage Book. 1994. 395 S.



In diesem viel zitierten Werk geht Said den Ursprüngen der westlichen Ansichten über den Orient nach. Auszug, Hervorhebungen und Einfügungen durch Richard Dähler (RD), Mai 2006. (24.8.2017)

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Eine schöne Würdigung widmet der Dirigent Daniel Barenboim dem Freund Edward Said in seinem Buch «Klang ist Leben», Siedler, 2008, S. 171/172.

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- 41 From 1815 to 1914 European direct colonial dominion expanded from about 35 percent of the earth’s surface to about 85 percent of it. For much of the nineteenth Century, as Lord Salisbury put it in 1881, the common view of France and England of the Orient was was : “if you are bent on meddling in a country in which you are deeply interested —you have **three courses open to you. You may renounce—or monopolize—or share.** Renouncing would have been to place the French across our road to India. Monopolizing would have been near the risk of war. So we resolved to share.” What they shared, however, was not only land or profit or rule; it was the **kind of intellectual power I have been calling Orientalism.**
- 42 **If the essence of Orientalism is the ineradicable distinction between Western superiority and Oriental inferiority**, then we must be prepared to note how in its development and subsequent history, Orientalism deepened and even hardened the distinction.
- 108 No better instance exists today of what Anwar Abdel Malek¹ calls „the **hegemonism of possessing minorities**“ and anthropocentrism allied with Europocentrism: a white middle-class Westerner believes it his human prerogative not only to manage the nonwhite world but also to own it, just because by definition „it“ is not

¹ Ägyptischer marxistischer Soziologe, *1924.

quite as human as „we“ are. There is no purer example than this of dehumanized thought.

- 172 **The Crusades were not only about the deliverance of the Holy Sepulchre, but more about knowing which would win on the earth, a cult that was civilization's enemy**, systematically favorable to ignorance [this was Islam, of course], to despotism, to abate the genius of a sage antiquity, and had abolished base servitude. This is the first significant mention of an idea that will acquire an almost unbearable, next to mindless authority in European writing: **the theme of Europe teaching the Orient the meaning of liberty**, which is an idea that Chateaubriand² and everyone after him believed that Orientals, and especially Muslims, knew nothing about. Already in 1810 we have a European talking like Cromer³ in 1910, arguing that Orientals require conquest, and finding it no paradox that a Western conquest of the Orient was not conquest after all, but liberty.
- 177 When he began his trip to the Orient in 1833, Lamartine⁴ did so, he said, as something he had always dreamed about: “un voyage en Orient [était] comme un grand acte de ma vie intérieure.” He is a bundle of predispositions, sympathies, biases: he hates the Romans and Carthage, and loves Jews, Egyptians, and Hindus, whose Dante he claims he will become.
- 179 Thus in Lamartine's climactic vision the Orient is reborn as European right to-power over it:

This sort of suzerainty thus defined, and consecrated as a European right, will consist principally in the right to occupy one or another territory, as well as the coasts, in order to find there either free cities, or European colonies, or commercial ports of call. . . .

Nor does Lamartine stop at this. He climbs still higher to the point where the Orient, what he has just seen and where he has just been, is reduced to „nations without territory, patrie, rights, laws or security . . . waiting anxiously for the shelter“ of European occupation.

² François René, 1768-1848, französischer Schriftsteller und Diplomat.

³ Evelyn Baring, 1841-1917, britischer Politiker und Kolonialverwalter.

⁴ Alphonse de, 1790-1869, französischer Schriftsteller und Politiker.