

Edward Said's Theory of Mind

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Abstract

Objective: This paper aims to explore Edward Said's Theory of Mind, with a particular focus on his famous book, "Beginnings, Intention, and Method" (1975).

Methods: The paper delves into an analysis of Said's work "Beginnings" from a philosophical perspective. It specifically investigates Said's relationship to eminent thinkers such as René Descartes, Ludwig Wittgenstein, Georg Von Leibniz, Bertrand Russell, and other influential figures whom Said held in high regard.

Results: The study reveals that Said aligns himself more with Modern Western Philosophers than with literary Western theorists. It highlights Said's rejection of Foucault's ideas and his alignment with Derrida. Moreover, Said emerges as a representative of Nahda intellectuals, advocating for writing as a means to speak truth to power. It found that Said was more of a philosopher than a literary theorist. Said introduced literary theorists because he wanted to exclude them from literary academia. In Said's mind, literary theorists have presented knowledge as a discontinuity rather than a continuity to disrupt the consciousness of the Arabs.

Conclusion: The study concludes that Edward Said can be more accurately characterized as a philosopher rather than a literary theorist.

Keywords: Metaphysics, deconstruction, influence, Said, beginnings, theory, mind.

نظرية العقل لإدوارد سعيد

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ملخص

الأهداف: يهدف هذا المقال إلى استكشاف نظرية العقل لإدوارد سعيد. بين السطور ، سيحلل كتابه الشهير بدايات ومقاصد ومنهجية 1975 ،

المنهجية: ستعمق الورقة في تحليل بدايات عمله من منظور فلسفي. على وجه التحديد ، ستركز الدراسة على فكرة علاقة سعيد بمفكرين مثل رنيه ديكرت ، ولودفيج فيتجنشتاين ، وجورج فون ليبنيز ، وبرتاند راسل ، والعديد من الشخصيات المهمة الأخرى التي يولها سعيد تقديرًا كبيرًا. كما وجدت الدراسة أن وجدت أن سعيد كان فيلسوفًا أكثر منه منظرا أدبيا. قدم سعيد المنظرين الأدبيين لأنه أراد استبعادهم من الأوساط الأكاديمية الأدبية. في ذهن سعيد ، قدم المنظرون الأدبيون المعرفة على أنها انقطاع وليس استمرارية لتعطيل وعي العرب.

النتائج: ستوضح نتيجة الدراسة كيف ينتسب سعيد إلى فلاسفة الغرب الحديثين أكثر بكثير من ارتباطه بالمنظرين الغربيين الأدبيين. الخلاصة: ركزت الخاتمة على أن سعيد فيلسوفًا أكثر من كونه منظراً أدبياً.. الكلمات الدالة: الميتافيزيقيا، تفكيك تأثير، قال، البدايات نظرية، عقل.



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Introduction

Edward Said remains a prolific scholar and an intellectual thinker whose books are still widely studied and discussed in literary academia. In 1978, one of his most influential works entitled *Orientalism* has had a great impact to the point that it created a myriad of literary productions that demonstrated how Arabs and Muslims were represented in Western literary texts. As a bestseller, *Orientalism*'s first success was due to its half marvelous and half scandalous representations and images that exposed different accounts and caricatures about the Arabs and their backwardness, and that is what made the book appear so provocative and controversial. However, what most readers failed to notice in that book is that Said did not focus only on the negative representations of the Orient, on the contrary, he even recognized that some authors were genuinely amazed by Middle Eastern culture. As Timothy Brennan puts it in his recent work *Places of Mind: A Life of Edward Said* (2021), "Said demonstrated his high regard for many of the Orientalists he criticizes in the book, marveling at Louis Massignon, 'a mind altogether of another sort of magnitude', admiring also Raymond Schwab's 'ingeniously obvious motifs'" (176). Brennan adds, in Said's mind, *Orientalism*'s success had everything to do with the fact that Orientalists have learned their lessons well (176).

In other words, *Orientalism* was also written to partly uncover how "the degree to which representation is part of reality, not just its rendering its words, but rather try to gauge the accuracy or inaccuracy of the Orientalist's account of Arab and Islamic life" (Brennan, 181). For this reason, before writing *Orientalism*, Said needed to publish *Beginnings, Intention, and Method* (1975); an epistemological work that elaborates on how ideas can easily circulate, influence, acquire and form authority in the actual world. Therefore, *Orientalism*'s main purpose was to also show in a specific way how "the humanities have political consequences" (181), and that is one of Said's most important legacies.

After *Orientalism*, Said published other books where he expressed clearly his love for humanism. Besides that, he made unexpected "alliances, carved out new institutional spaces, badgered diplomats and counseled members of Congress- a harsh critic of the U.S. news establishment, and a major media personality himself" (Brennan, XII). Despite all of these positions, one may argue that Said's intellectual thinking cannot be perceived only from his career as a political activist, nor from his hybrid identity as an American-Palestinian, but rather from another field that Said has never dared to mention. Moreover, Said's status as an intellectual was also bound to his career as a professor of comparative literature. In Said's mind, literature is one of the fields that open several debates concerning academic fashions like "affect theory, posthumanism, universalism, and the "good which he expressed in just those terms" (Brennan, XIV). However, for Said, even literature lacked real discussions about humanism in a very proper way because he believed that "students of literature are expected to be trained not only in the smattering of humanities-in translation but an urgent sense of other knowledge and para-knowledge" (7). Targeting specifically the idea of how to build formal intellectuals, Said thinks that literature remains not constructive enough, simply because a large number of authors reflect reality only, they do not transform it. In this respect, it would be safe to say that, Said's book *Beginnings, Intention and Method* (1975) exposes this dilemma; his account on literature and its relation to philology is a minor subject he discusses compared to what he attempts to advance in this book.

In *Beginnings*, Said argues, "to have reached such a propaedeutic conclusion in a book about beginnings is perhaps too neat a trick" (380). In another section, he states, "the presentations of these beginnings of ideas about beginnings, the subject of this book, has been using setting forth upon the essay...for me...what I write says what I am about and reminds us both of what I have not been able to write" (25). In this section, Said wants to interject simultaneously the mind of the reader by informing him to search about what he was not able to write or convey throughout his work. The beginnings for Said are the ends, and the ends are the beginnings. That is to say, the point of departure is presented at the end of the book. As he states, "a beginning methodologically unites a practical need with theory, an intention with a method" (380). He adds "in retrospect, we can regard a beginning as the point at which, in a given work, the writer departs from all other works" (3). Said thinks that a beginning is a kind of a vulgar of influence; it is more or less a vulgar habit of influence. In fact, for Said, the beginnings are some sort of vulgar of influences and continuities; they are universal principles in which one may call them derived achievements (15). But then, one must ask, what is the beginning for Said? What does it represent exactly? For what reason does he keep referring to it over and over again? Based on this statement, the paper will thus scrutinize and deconstruct

Beginnings, Intention, and Method in detail to understand Said's main intention behind writing *Orientalism* and his later works. In addition, the paper aims to prove that Said is a philosopher and not a literary theorist.

Said's rejection of Derrida's theory of deconstruction

Beginnings, Intention, and Method (1975) remains one of Said's early works. *Beginnings* are often seen as complex, confusing, and filled with unimportant ideas, but that is because Said refuses to show what is new and demanding about his critical thinking. In his article "On Beginnings", Michael Wood indicates that between the lines of *Beginnings* Said wants to isolate a problem; the question of what it means to begin, and that is by exploring the evidence and the appropriate discursive language (63). According to Wood, in several passages of *Beginnings*, Said does not reject the failure of logic, on the contrary, Said embraces repeatedly rationality and intuitive skepticism. As Said puts it, "one must return to human rationality its function as a force for turbulence and aggression" (40). To some extent, one may say that this statement opens an important discussion about rationalism and the understanding of the mind itself. For Said, the beginning is the mind, and the mind is the beginning. As he argues, "the beginning is very much a creature of the mind, very much like a bristling paradox, yet also very a figure of thought of thought that draws special attention to itself" (77). If one must speak about the mind itself, one must return to the rise of early modern rationalism including Descartes who perceived "the problem of mind and body relationships as a pivotal position in the philosophy of mind; alternative theories have been discussed to offer solutions to this problem, but the problem remains unsolved" (Sahoo, 1).

A large contribution in *Beginnings* thus is devoted specifically to this internal role of activity that is related to the mind itself. The mind, Said emphasizes is "the matrix of thought, or else, it amasses a good deal of substance" (14-337). Indeed, the mind remains the beginnings of all things; the beginning of what Said calls "the influential writing that goes against writing" (21). Said sees the mind as a bloodless mechanism that holds a system of a wide range of logical and illogical truths, in which he thinks that it is the basic cause of any kind of systematic determinism.

For many years, Said was often regarded as a founder of post-colonial discourse who was influenced by Michel Foucault's work *The Archeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Power* (1969). In his article, "Edward Said and Michel Foucault", Rahim *et al* argue, "Said deploys Michel Foucault's notion of discourse to accomplish his project of *Orientalism*" (1). However, those who did not focus on his work of *Beginnings* were unlikely to miss that Said criticized overtly Foucault. Moreover, in *The World the Text and The Critic* (1997), Said made it clear enough that literary theory presented itself with new claims. He stated, "literary theory, for the most part, isolated textuality from the circumstances, the events, the physical senses that made it possible and render it intelligible as the result of human work" (4).

In his article "On Beginnings", Michael Wood argues, French structuralists for Said, whatever their influences and continuities, have focused on the idea of how to make a beginning seem original. For instance, Michel Foucault and others believed that "rational knowledge is possible, regardless of how complex- and even unattractive the conditions of its production and acquisition" (63). In several passages of *Beginnings*, Said criticizes overtly the structuralists. For example, in his chapter "Abecedarium Culturae: Absence, Writing, Statement, Discourse, Archeology, Structuralism", Said states,

"The difficulties of dealing with the individualized, technical and diverse events that taken together I have called contemporary French thought...these critics have made the problem of beginnings the beginning—and in a sense the center—of their thought. Such a determination has been tied to the connection between beginnings and language" (281).

Starting with Foucault, Said analyses his first work *The Order of Things* as an appendix to the *Archeology of knowledge* (399) to reveal how Foucault rejects philosophy and more particularly human agency in his theories. That is to say, Foucault presents the idea of how knowledge is related to the world i.e., the idea of the subject and its relation to the object. As Said argues, "since the nineteenth century (and the relevance of Wittgenstein's later work is crucial to this *aperçu*) is bound up in the nature of language" (283). On another page, Said states, "the drama of Foucault's work is that he is always coming to terms with language as both constricting horizon and the energizing atmosphere within and by which all human activity must be understood" (284). Said admits that Foucault's two major historical works including *The Order of Things* and *The History of*

Madness present respectively “the social discriminations of “otherness” and the cognitive connections between sameness” (284). Said explains, in his former work about madness, Foucault presents the history of madness as a term that is isolated outside language. That is to say, Foucault does not relate the word to its signifier, but rather he presents through language words that are made into a universal collection of signs for everything (284).

Before writing *De la grammatology* (1967), Derrida criticized Foucault in an essay entitled “Cogito and The History of Madness” (1963), Derrida points out, Foucault’s main intention in his book *The History of Madness* was to reinscribe an interpretation of the Cartesian Cogito within the total framework of the history of madness. According to Derrida, Foucault relies on Descartes’ first *Meditation* to formulate his argument about madness. Derrida explains that Foucault wanted to write History of madness itself; that is, madness speaking based on its own experience and under its authority, and not a history of madness described from within language of reason (Alan *trans* Derrida, 34). Derrida emphasizes, “madness” is a term that should be beneath psychiatry, but Foucault crushed it; dominated it; made it as an object exiled as the other of a language and historical meaning which has been confused with logos itself.

In *The World, The Text and the Critic*, Said shows that he read Derrida’s critique of Foucault to criticize him as well, as he says, “Foucault’s book gesture of a protection and internment. A Cartesian gesture for the twentieth century, a reappropriation of negativity” (190). Said reveals,

“Foucault has read Descartes naively, mistaking Descartes and domesticating notion of a doubt, making it appear that Descartes had served folly from reason, whereas according to Derrida, a close reading of Descartes’s texts shows the contrary, that Descartes’s hyperbolic theory of doubt included the idea of “Malin Genie” whose function it was, not to banish, but to include folly as part of the originating and original flaw undermining the order of rationality itself.” (190).

Said rejects Foucault and the structuralists in general simply because their theory is philosophically empirical. That is to say, they have “a continual empirical knowledge through theory change” (Fraassen, 1). In his article Structuralism: A Destitution of the Subject, Étienne Balibar argues, in his work *The Order of Things* (1966), Foucault offers a rejection of “the human sciences”, and calls into question the empiric-transcendental dualism. Foucault questions precisely the constitution of man as both subject and object set of knowledge. For Balibar, the rise of this enigma puts into question the articulation between the structuralist’s adventure and the problem of philosophical anthropology i.e., not only the question of whether there is a philosophy of man and the human, but also the question of whether philosophy as such is “a thought of humanity” or of the humanities that distribute human existence by assigning it variety norms, or still a kind of differential of humanity and inhumanity (7).

In another section of *Beginnings*, Said argues,

“Foucault’s *The Order of Things* is occupied with the vacant space between things, words and ideas. In the eighteenth century, the possibility of presenting things in space derived from the acceptance of temporal succession...the idea that objects could coexist in the privileged space of a painting depended upon an unquestioned belief in the continuing forward movement of time. Spatial togetherness was thus conceived to emanate from the temporal succession. Yet in the modern era profound sense of spatial distance between things, the sense that separates even like things from one another, permits the modern mind as only an illusion of succession, as a promise of unity or a return to the origin. Above all, time is the most tenuous of the special configurations that to bridge the gap between things” (286)

In the quote above, Said turns to metaphysics in order to reject structuralism. In *Beginnings*, Said criticizes Foucault’s theories, for structuralism as a movement pays attention to the idea of truth as a perfect condition of knowledge. Said, then, turns to Foucault and other structuralists including Levi Strauss, Barthes, and Lacan to show how they have relied on Descartes’s maxims to overcome their doubts. That is to say, they have created new theories and rejected all their precursors, and this is similar to what Descartes explains in his book first *Meditation*. Said states that, Barthes, Levi-Strauss, and Foucault have used,

“The idea of the loss of the subject... Subject in its more exact context means the thinking subject or the speaking subject, the subjectivity that defines human identity, the *cogito* that enables the Cartesian world of objects. The influence of thinking subject in Western thought has been so profound” (287).

According to Said, structuralists encourage in general the idea of “knowledge as a closed system of knowledge for or of man by man. Since knowledge can only be formulated in language, linguistics becomes more a perception than an explanation of man” (287). It is obvious when he declares,

“Foucault’s theories are not intended to be used in a kind of a passkey for unlocking texts, this idea, which I shall return from time to time... structuralism is one of the aspects a method which a writer’s sense of the text wishes to produce counter to how the culture at large views text” (225-289).

Said declares that, the structuralists have created this movement to disturb the idea of how to make one point more general, and this is related to Kant’s “a *priori* forms of intuition and inner sensing (empirical reality)” (Marinay, 4). He states that plainly, “Foucault distinguishes between a thing in itself in a Kantian or Platonic sense” (294). To attack the structuralists thus, Said turns to Derrida, “Derrida wishes to show that textuality in the modern West has been conceived as the abyss in which the presence of reality is represented as absence” (340). In *L’Ecriture et la difference*, Derrida presents how the absence of the center for the structuralists presents a universal problem. As Said argues, “the meaning of the word, of a sign, for the structuralists is diacritical” (341).

On another page, Said goes on to connect the movement of structuralism to Ludwig Wittgenstein’s analytic philosophy where he defines how a text opens a discussion for another text. That is to say, texts are always presented in a sort of remarks *Bemerkungen*. In the *Blue Book* (1933), from the point of view of G.E.M Anscombe, Wittgenstein turns to the grammar of words that describe mental activities such as seeing, hearing, feeling, etc... (Grimi 3). According to Elisa Grimm, this amounts to the same as saying that we are concerned only with grammar and phrases describing the sense of data (Empiricism). Grimi argues, Wittgenstein claimed that, “the use of the word in practice is its meaning”. Wittgenstein believes that the Grammar of an expression such as “descriptions can only be derived from my sensory data”. Grimi asserts, for Wittgenstein, the meaning of an expression depends on its use: mind: action, and language. In this sense, Grimi states, Wittgenstein rejects mentalism and rather prefers to accept the idea of the senses.

In another article “Ludwig Wittgenstein”, Anat Biletzki and Anat Matar argue, in his work *The Blue Book* (1933), Wittgenstein challenges the idea that conceptions arrive at the insight that “if we had to name anything which is in the life of the sign, we should have to say that it was its use” (2007). For Wittgenstein, philosophers must look rather than think, and this is what Said rejects in *Beginnings* since he wants his readers to think rather than see. Clearly, in *Beginnings*, Said argues, “Wittgenstein carefully organized the book as an *assemblage* for many *Bemerkungen* (notes) together constituting a multifarious and ramified attack on the problem of philosophy that produces the effect that is intended” (224). In the *Philosophical Investigations*, Wittgenstein admitted that the fact that the transitions in *the investigations* together with a zigzag method of proceeding through “the wide field of thought”, give an impression of a failed text. However, Anscombe remarks that later in *the Blue Book*, Wittgenstein was afraid to announce that the text, in general, is based only “on remarks”. That is to say, there are no meanings that can be searched for in the outside world. Said rejects this conception since he thinks that a text is only a text; language is simply a language. He states,

“a text contains not ‘only remarks’, and related to it, the question of whether everything that is written is, therefore, a text. A text is not simply the record of an immediate desire to write; there is no analogy between writing and, let us say, eating as the consequence of hunger. Rather, a text distributes various textual intentions, regularly and on several axes... Foucault’s analyses, while on the whole abstract, have the great merit of showing that a text is less a unit bound together by an individual author, a period, or the idea of ‘work’ or of an ‘idea’ than it is a discursive formation made up by statements. To those who persist in making contingent printing devices (book, documents, etc.) Ontological units of irreducible value, it is possible to say that a text is a fundamental epistemological judgment” (225).

Said rejects Foucault and other structuralists, for they have made the idea of what is in the text is contained in the text (a fundamental epistemological judgment). He assumes, “A statement is not necessarily a sentence just as for Wittgenstein a *Bemerkung* was not one necessarily either, nor it is simply a unit that can be described using grammar and logic” (225). In this sense, Said turns to Derrida and his theory of deconstruction to oppose Foucault and the structuralists in general.

In his article “Derrida, Foucault, and the Transformation of the Transcendental Question”, Thomas Khurana argues,

Derrida's critique of *History of Madness* is not an attempt to repudiate Foucault's critique of the great confinement of madness, nor his linking it to Descartes's infinitesimal rationalism. On the contrary, Derrida explicitly affirms, Descartes participates in the exclusion of madness that Foucault tries overtly to trace (21). Derrida's critique of Foucault's book *The History of Madness* thus demonstrates that he wanted to renew the project of critique to oppose the Foucauldian Archeology. Said asserts openly, "Derrida's writing converts the principles of structuralism into surreal, large objects whose over-accurate relationship to the original versions mocks them, overwhelms them, plays havoc with them" (340). Said adds, "Derrida believes that structuralism is logocentric; it is a philosophy of written texts; which are understood supplementary to speech...he argues, structuralists of notions of evidence and necessity are forms of desire" (p.340). Balibar also states, structuralism as a system presents itself as a practice of immanent externality. That is to say, it exposes the idea of "a thought of the outside in opposition to the foundational, reflexive, ontological, or apophantic styles of philosophy" (5). As a result, Said rejects Foucault and criticizes his works to position himself with Derrida. He states, "the peculiar problem of French structuralist's outlook is purposefully and deservedly exposed in Jacques Derrida's writing, a philosopher of his right, Derrida deserves mention in any consideration to structuralism. (339).

Said versus Structuralism

In *Beginnings*, Said criticizes the mind of structuralists. He states, "The mind of structuralist is determined even in the realm of mythologies" (56). In his article, "Structuralism, Anti-Structuralism, and Objectivity, Derek Pereboom argues, structuralist theories generally describe the entities in their domains solely in terms of relations. According to Pereboom, structuralists like to affirm that the standard variety of structuralism about mental entities, external relations, and functionalism that aims to provide a complete theory of the mental by adjusting specifically the relations of mental states that have "sensory inputs, behavioral outputs, and other mental states" (1). Pereboom recognizes that, "structuralist theories have been controversial precisely because they claim to be complete while specifying entities solely in terms of relations" (1). Lucidly, for Pereboom, structuralism generally satisfies a certain ideal of objectivity, and structuralists themselves hold on to the claim that for non-structuralist theories; this ideal cannot be reached. Pereboom explains the link between structure and objectivity is not transparent, because it is indirectly related to the seventeenth-century ideology of prime matter. That is to say, philosophers of the seventeenth century mainly Descartes proposes a matter as an extension of "three dimensions, endorsing the intelligible component of Aquinas's theory, and deleting its unintelligible element, prime matter" (1). Pereboom asserts, space is to some extent defined as an extension in three dimensions i.e.; matter and space are identical by definition. In this sense, one can gradually view that Descartes is a structuralist because Descartes assumes the conception of matter in space. According to Pereboom, it is Leibniz who first saw that Descartes's theory is a structuralist one, and it is in response to Leibniz that Kant formulates the long-standing core objection to structuralism. Said thus breaks from Foucault, for he thinks that "Foucault ignores or effaces his precursors, making his ideas appear more original than they were" (Brennan, 176).

Unlike Foucault, Derrida's theory of deconstruction rejects partly the Cartesian Cogito. To some extent, Said saw in such theory an "authentic existence, or the doctrine of the untranslatability of language, which implied the idea of how human beings are imprisoned by their own native cultures and cannot get out" (Brennan, 170). Later on, in the 1960s and 1970s, Said assumed that Derrida was just "a quietest Heideggerian type at that time" (Said qt in Brennan, 108). In *Beginnings* precisely, Said quotes him indirectly in a passage, "a problem for study of 'beginnings' are attractive, first of all, because while one can isolate a beginning analytically, the notion of beginning itself is practically tied up in a whole complex of relations" (5-6). The notion of retrospection is obvious in this section; Said seems to assume that a beginning is itself a form of thinking, and that thinking is related to whole complex *objects* of relations. To elucidate further, one must elaborate on Derrida's influence by Heidegger. In his article, "Jacques Derrida's Theory of Deconstruction of Western Metaphysics: The Early Years", Girasimos Kakoliris argues, the history of metaphysics is closely connected to a circle of "repression and suppression of writing" (2). According to Kakoliris, Derrida's theory of deconstruction is systematically "logocentric" or "phonocentric" in its genesis, because this theory is connected to the historical determination of the meaning of "Being" in general as a presence. Kakoliris affirms that the theory of deconstruction is Heideggerian, for it establishes a comprehension of Being as "a simple unit

completely transparent and self-subsistent origin or foundation” (p.03). Indeed, for Derrida, the determination of Being manifests itself in the historical structure of metaphysics through “the presence of ‘the thing to the sight as *eidos*’, presence as ‘substance’, ‘essence’ or ‘existence’ (*ousia*); the temporal presence as point, the presence of the *cogito*, consciousness, and subjectivity” (3).

It is important to note that, in the 1960s and 1970s, Derrida read many great figures including a series of major thinkers who exposed in their works the subject of “speech and phenomena” such as Rousseau, Saussure, Lévi Strauss, and Husserl. In making an apparent reading, Derrida focused on the immediate expressiveness and full presence of speech to itself as a continual process that is connected to an intention of the author i.e., “in which language, in general, is a species of writing” (Kakorilis, 5). For Derrida, speech cannot be separated from the attribute of metaphysics. That is to say, the spoken language is always already a structure by difference and non-presence. Language for Derrida is always connected to identity, speech, meaning, etc. Hence, Derrida thinks in the linguistic system, each “present” element remains distinguished from another element. The “sign” therefore that Derrida investigates is just a “trace”, a term that he borrows from Emmanuel Levinas. For Derrida, the term “trace” is related to “the interval between the elements that are described in spacing and time and the difference between them can be seen as a ‘temporization’” (Kakorilis, 7). For Derrida thus, the term “difference” in its meaning means something different from something else. That is to say, Derrida thinks that it includes first and foremost the spatial dimension, which refers specifically to “the space that separates the differing sign from one another, and to the space that is opened up within the sign itself, since the sign is not identical with itself” (7).

Derrida’s theory of deconstruction, then, conceives meaning only on the very basis of presence; a foundation exists beneath every meaning, which constitutes an immediate presence (Kakorilis, 3). For this reason, for Kakorilis, Derrida’s theory on meaning, language, presence, or origin are systematically condensed in neologism, or neographism i.e., “difference”. Certainly, in his “Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences” (1966), Kakorilis remarks, “there is no sense of doing without the concepts of metaphysics to shake metaphysics” (Derrida qt in Kakorilis 7). Therefore, in opposing Foucault, Derrida seeks to eventually disrupt the order of a structure by investigating “the closed metaphysical circle of the order of reason” (Kakorilis, 7). However, despite the captivity of language within metaphysics, Derrida finds it necessary to trace the alterity that is irreducible to metaphysics. In this case, Kakorilis reveals, for Derrida, to deconstruct philosophy would be to think in an interior way about “the structural genealogy of philosophy’s concepts, but at the same time, to determine from a certain exterior that is unqualifiable or unnamable by philosophy...what this history has been able to dissimulate” (10).

In 1967, Derrida declared that the term “deconstruction” is similar to Heidegger’s terms of “destruction and *Abbau*, which means (dismantling)”. Heidegger had used the term ‘*Destruktion*’ in his work *Sein und Zeit* (1927) to explain the task of destroying the history of ontology in a sense of “dismantling the dissolution of the sedimented layers and accretions that were accumulated by the metaphysical tradition” (Kakorilis, 11). Fascinatingly, Derrida takes the Heideggerian *Destruktion* by which he also means “the overcoming of metaphysics” that could be reached through repetition. For Kakorilis, Derrida’s theory of deconstruction observes the notion of “the ends of man”. That is to say, in the Heideggerian structure, it remains insufficient to change the terrain of metaphysics. His notion of *Being* and its relation to *Dasein* is perceived as a binarism of being and its temporality i.e., time. At a certain point, Derrida thinks, the concept of time that Heidegger uses remains metaphysical in a sense that it could remain metaphysical, because time in general “belongs to the resources and possibilities of metaphysical conceptuality, and its names the domination of presence” (Kakorilis, 11). Hence, the aim of the theory of deconstruction is, at last, a metaphysical structure of a text. In the 1960s and 70s, Derrida has elaborated on how a text is constituted by a set of hierarchical binary oppositions e.g., identity/difference, speech/writing, inside/outside, man/woman, nature/civilization, good/evil, etc. For Kakorilis, this hierarchical ordering, which is presented as a form of binary opposition is itself a meaning that expresses a genealogy “presence” of something in the universe (12). Said wanted the readers to deconstruct his text of *Beginnings* because it is a metaphysical one. For Derrida, a metaphysical text is never “homogenous” or “self-identical”. Kakorilis notes, a text doesn’t usually coincide with its declared intentions; there are always “counter-forces which threatens or undermine this authority” (Derrida qt in Kakorilis, 13). A metaphysical text always seeks to deliver metaphorical contradictions, and that is one of the techniques that Said uses in *Beginnings*.

In his work *Places of Mind: A Life of Edward Said* (2021), Timothy Brennan argues, the sources Said uses between the lines of *Beginnings* help to view that part of his influences were concerned with his faith in the laws of modern scientific logic (111). In *Beginnings*, Said refers to Gadamer and Heidegger who explored in their works “a response to the subjectivist and idealist elements in German thought that were present in the neo-Kantian tradition” (Malpas, 2018). In the references of *Beginnings*, Said mentioned *see Wahrheit und Methode* (1960) by George Hans-Gadamer. In *Truth and Method*, Gadamer states,

“The specific problem that the human sciences present to the thought are that one has not rightly grasped their nature if one measures them by the yardstick of progressive knowledge of regularity. The experience of the sociohistorical world cannot be raised to a science by the inductive procedure of the natural sciences...the individual case does not serve only to confirm a law from which practical predictions can be made. Its ideal is rather to understand the phenomenon itself in its unique and historical concreteness” (39).

The quote above affirms that Gadamer is mostly concerned with the idea of reviving the abstract concrete thinking of Kant who himself came up with the idea of “categorical imperative” in his work *The Groundwork of Metaphysics of Morals* (1778). Categorical imperative reflects the notion of how to “act only according to that maxim whereby you can, at the same time, will that should become a universal law” (Kant *trans* Ameriks and Clarke, 11). In his article, “Hans-George Gadamer”, Jeff Malpas argues, In *Truth and Method* (1960), Gadamer reworks in a fashion way Heidegger’s *Being and Time* to stress “the anticipation of completeness”. That is to say, Gadamer wants to revive the idea that an individual ought to always involve “the revisable presupposition that what is to be understood constitutes of something understandable; that is, something that is constituted as a coherent, and therefore meaningful, as a whole” (Malpas, 2003). Said thus combines Heidegger to Gadamer to assert that both thinkers are pluralist, and this argument becomes clearer when one connects Heidegger to Leibniz. Interestingly, in his work *Heidegger and Leibniz and the Path of Reason* (1998), Gadamer exposes the evident relation between Heidegger and Leibniz and their meeting points in logic and metaphysics. According to Gadamer, Heidegger shares the same position as Leibniz in unifying the relation between logic and metaphysics. Heidegger for instance seeks to reformulate a Leibnizian structure in his work of *Being and Time*; and that is by showing how logic and ontology are “interwoven in an overall metaphysical horizon, giving rise to hermeneutical difficulties and causing his interpreters to be excessively unilateral” (Gadamer, 8). For Gadamer, Leibniz does not focus on the *ratio cognoscendi* i.e., “the possibility of knowledge, or the possibility of reason by which something is known to exist” (Oxford Dictionary). On the contrary, Gadamer believes that if one takes the principle or the root of reason, one would be able to realize that through reason, there is a metaphysical principle. In this sense, Heidegger interprets this paradigm and makes it “a primary role to metaphysics in Leibniz’s thought” (8). In parallel, Gadamer asserts, to understand Heidegger means to also understand Leibnizian’s point of view. According to Gadamer, Leibniz has intelligently divided topology into three levels: “the subjective sphere and the cosmological one, finding in both traces of the universal conjoining, the infinite foundation that can be led back to God” (8).

God’s creation of the Monad for Leibniz is systematically connected to “the foundation reason that consists of the ability of an individual substance to mirror the entire universe from its point of view” (Gadamer, 3). According to Gadamer, for Leibniz, the Monad is essentially conatus, because it is related to the perspective and appetitive force of one’s individual. As Gadamer explains, “it is not something acquired and additional, but rather it is co-essential with the subjective structure, forming part of the monadic atomism” (8). This is where Heidegger formulates his vicious circle i.e., a thought that moves in a circle, which he calls a *Being* and its *Dasein*. However, it is important to note that what Heidegger did not make explicit is “the attention to the subterranean theoretical modulations, which were left aside by the philosophical tradition that concerned itself with the principle, starting from Leibniz himself” (Gadamer, 9). For Gadamer, the voice that they both left is concerned with the evasive unexpressed voice of silence. That is to say, they both causally view the world causal things; observed from an entity potentially contained in its cause or its contributing causes. Such a specific process moves from what is dissimilar to “a single form, from variety to singularity; from the determined to the determining, we notice the co-existence of various special disciplines within *metaphysical generalis* or pluralism” (12). Hence, Gadamer argues, this cognitive process begins by an analysis of the manifestation of an entity to an understanding of its origin i.e., the concept of a cause, and Heidegger

discovers in the Leibnizian metaphysics “the monadological principle that is endowed with a force of *Being*, which alone causes a single entity to be as such” (13). Seen from this perspective, Said seems to even reject Derrida’s post-structuralism, because it is conceived as a closed system. He argues in one of the sections,

“The play (*jeu*) of signifiers, which Derrida calls a series of infinite substitutions, takes place on a field, or space, of language that is limited and marked by the lack of a center...Derrida’s writing provides our mental activity with kinds of organization, and they fix aspects of our direction. This is why we continue to be logocentric, and our minds remain rooted in a doctrine of signs, fastened upon the paradox of absence, committed to difference rather than value” (342).

Poststructuralism as a response to structuralism thus remains a philosophical school of thought that subscribes to the understanding of how language creates rather than reflects meaning. Specifically, for Derrida, to deconstruct means to bridge the gap between language’s signifiers and the meaning that language intends to signify ultimately unbridgeable. For this reason, Said refuses to stand with post-structuralists, because of their ambiguous school of thought that provides an ontological universal truth (Greenberg, 2).

As a consequence, for Said, Foucault and other structuralists are dualists. That is to say, they believe that true knowledge derives from the senses; what the mind conceives must be necessarily true. Indeed, in his *Discourse on Method* (1637), Descartes began precisely with this cognitive process in assuming “I”; I do not know myself, but if I take the apple in my hand and I judge it simply by seeing it, I would know that I exist. Self-consciousness is for Descartes the rational basis for self-seeing and self-judgment. (Alan, 3).

Post-structuralists, on the other hand, follow Leibniz’s concept of “Monadology” which “is based upon one simple substance” (Latta,1). Leibniz states, “The Monad, of which we shall here speak, is nothing but a simple substance which enters into compounds” (Latta, 1). For Leibniz, the mind of one’s individual is composed of one single substance, but within that substance, there is a Monad that God has created to perceive things in the outside world. For Leibniz, the Monad is actually indivisible, and these Monads are “the real atoms of nature, and in the elements of things” (1). Their function is to demonstrate how the substance cannot be destroyed by natural means. That is to say, every Monad is different from one another, and each individual has his own Monad that is different from one another. For Leibniz, the Monad comes from an internal principle since the external cause can have no influence upon their specific being. Nevertheless, Leibniz explains, the Monad constitutes of the principle change i.e., it gathers nature and the variety of simple substance. This particular series of changes will involve multiplicity in the unit. Hence, the simple substance or the Monad is nothing but a form of perception, which is to be “distinguished from Apperception or Consciousness”. Leibniz affirms that the activity that derives from the Monad is an internal principle that is directly related to appetite. Hence, one may argue that Said rejects even the study of phenomenology since Husserl reveals throughout his study that consciousness is directly related to objects of the external world. In his *Logical Investigations* (1900), Husserl moved “from logic to philosophy of language to ontology (a theory of universals and parts of wholes), to a phenomenological theory of intentionality, and finally to a phenomenological theory of knowledge” (Woodruff, 7). Husserl in particular, defined phenomenology in his logical investigations as “the science of the essence of consciousness” (Woodruff, 7).

In a passage of *Beginnings*, Said explains, the point of departure requires two aspects that animate one another. The first one refers to the project that is being realized; that is, a beginning with an anticipated end (72). Said means by this the subject/object matter of Descartes. In another line, he states, the second aspect retains for

“The beginning its identity as a radical starting point: the intransitive and conceptual aspect, that which has no object but its own constant clarification. It is this second side that so fascinated Husserl (I spoke earlier of a beginning at the beginning, for the beginning) and that has continued to engage Heidegger. The two sides of starting point entail two styles of thought, and of imagination, one projective and descriptive, and the other tautological and endlessly self-mimetic. The transitive mode is always hungering, like Lovelace chasing Clarissa” (73).

In this passage, Said argues, Husserl departed from Leibniz’s monadology and agreed with Descartes, and Heidegger departed from Descartes and agreed with Leibniz. In his article, “Heidegger’s reading of Descartes’s Dualism”, Kadir Çučen explains, Heidegger rejects this distinction between subject and object by arguing that “there is no subject distinct from the

external world of things because *Dasein* is essentially Being-in-the-world” (2000). As a pluralist, Heidegger’s *Being* and its *Dasein* still justifies a certain tautology in space and time, and therefore, it is regarded as a closed system. For Husserl, on the other hand, it is the aspect of objective knowledge. In the references of *Beginnings*, Said stated, “Husserl is preoccupied with this throughout his *Cartesian Meditations: An introduction to phenomenology*” (386).

In another passage of *Beginnings*, Said indicates,

“The structuralist *découpage* (it is amusing to compare this term with Swift’s phrase ‘every man his own carver’ is borne along by a kind of *mathematical* ambition to turn details into a coherent field governed by a *set* whose function it is to operate systematically in linking all the details with one another”

The passage above explains that Said wants to show how structuralists reduce language to reality, and that is purely empirical. Said indicates that, the structuralist follows a mathematical ambition. To elucidate, to prove whether mathematics was discovered or invented, philosophers of mathematics combined mathematics with logic. For instance, Gottlob Frege “essentially reconceived the discipline of logic by constructing a formal system which, in effect, constituted the first ‘predicate calculus’” (N.Zalta, 2019). In his article, “Gottlob Frege”, Edward N. Zalta argues, Frege “developed an analysis of quantified statements and formalized notion of ‘a proof’ in terms that are still accepted today” (2019). According to N. Zalta, Frege developed a system that could resolve mathematical statements in terms of simpler logical and mathematical notions. N.Zalta asserts, Frege proved that all mathematical concepts derive from logic, but added later to his system that mathematics and logic have different significant parts that demonstrate that are inconsistent. For example, the *predecessor* relation and of the concept of the *natural number* was assumed to be derived from the axioms of number theory which constituted a significant advance. For this reason, to ground this view about the relationship of logic and mathematics, Frege conceived “a comprehensive philosophy of language that many philosophers still find it insightful” (N.Zalta, 2019). However, according to N.Zalta, Frege failed to prove that mathematics was reducible to logic at the end (2019).

Said, then, argues that structuralism in particular presented language as a world of signs in an orderly place, and this is very much related to Frege’s idea about how mathematics and logic were entirely not connected, he states that clearly,

“The structuralist’s assumption is that all details have the status of information... for Lévi-Strauss says that the world of signs is an orderly place and that there is order somewhere... the history of this kind of cybernetic hope in the West is a long one; it includes the Greek *atomists*, Lucretius, *Leibniz*, and *Descartes*, then more recently *Frege* and Wiener, and finally *the structuralists*” (324-325).

Said indicates that the structuralists follow a mathematical method in combing language with reality. For this reason, Derrida opposes their movement with his theory of deconstruction in which he proposes that the sign has a meaning that has another meaning and so on. Said’s criticism of structuralism and poststructuralism thus, is directly related to Descartes’s dualism and Leibniz’s pluralism. In another passage of *Beginnings*, he declares, “the mind wants to conceive a point in either time or space that marks the beginning of all things” (40). The point of departure or the beginning that Said discusses is also the point where everything seems to end as well.

In another section, Said argues, “a beginning shows us how much language, with its perpetual memories of silence, can do to a summon fiction and reality to an equal space in the mind” (78). In *Representation of the Intellectuals* (1993), he goes on to mention that Bertrand Russel is one of the thinkers whose theory holds a true image of how “language is a design that belongs to either to the whole world or to no particular country or tradition” (27). Indeed, in his essay “On Denoting”, Russel contradicts Frege with his theory of denoting phrases. He assumes, “I shall discuss the theories of Frege and Meinong, and showing why neither of them satisfies me; then I shall give the ground, in favor of my theory” (2). Russel introduces his theory of denoting as follows,

“I take the notion of variable “CX” to mean a proposition in which X is a constituent, where X, is the variable, is essentially and wholly undetermined. Then we can consider the two notions “CX” is always true and “CX” is sometimes true. Then, everything, nothing, and something are to be interpreted as follows,

-C (everything means) “CX” is always true.

-C (nothing) means “CX” is always true.

-C (something) means “it is false that “CX” is false is always true” (3).

From this perspective, Said uses Russell’s theory of denoting to explain the idea that the point of departure is neither true or false; the point of departure is a postulate, an assumption in space. He declares,

“The theory argues that just as in geometry one can posit a hypothetical beginning point from which lines can be extended (*the point remaining a postulate*, but one which is valid because all lines are divisible into infinitesimal indivisible points), so too in metaphysical terms one can posit *a beginning point* (Axiom) which neither entirely minds or abstraction nor matter (or concreteness). The so-called metaphysical point then becomes conation—what is in this book I have been calling beginning, intention—which in history is human will, understood both as temporally and absolutely” (361).

The point of departure of Said is the metaphysical point introduced by Vico’s *New Sciences*, in the Index of *Beginnings*, he asserts, “a beginning used to designate a later time, utopian models based on Vico’s metaphysical point of writing as zero point to structuralists” (406).

In his work *Places of Mind: A Life of Edward Said* (2021), Timothy Brennan argues, Said was interested in the task of writing as a move that could help him to liberate Palestine. For this reason, he saw in Giambattista Vico a humanist side, a “study where all human verbal activity, not just poems or novels, but law, sociology, economics, and history; a total art and a new science” (119). In teaching philology at the University of Harvard, Said was eager to renew all traditionalists’ great philologists, simply because they were not far from philosophers and the spirit of modernism itself. In doing so, Said wanted to exclude literary theory from the literary academia, blaming specifically thinkers like Foucault, Derrida, and Barthes and their summarized complementary and discontinuity of knowledge that lacked a singular logos. Brennan adds, “Said was looking for an originality that is based on *Tradition*, and paradoxically Foucault stood in his way. He declared in a passage of *Beginnings*”

The origin and the beginning are both hopelessly alien to, and absent from [what Foucault means by] the stream of discourse. (This is a structuralist position which, in the course of this book, have implicitly been criticizing and modifying; here, however, I am presenting the position as they have argued it.” (Said qt in Brennan 167).

Said’s goal in *Beginnings* thus, was to reformulate the understanding of how language or representation of reality gives too much authority to one’s individual mind. In affiliating himself with Vico specifically, Said thinks that an individual must think about how one can always begin again without giving a specific authority to the text or writing itself. According to Brennan, Said used to think that the Arabs are unable to form a language that would reveal to them the true reality of things, and Said wanted Foucault to help him to change “tools necessary for the enterprise finding just such a form of language, but only one tempered by Vico” (168). In this sense, Brennan assumes, Said’s particular attention to “language and its structure was a way to ultimately change the dogmatic fixity of classical Arabic itself” (163).

In Said’s view, the Arabs are unable to understand the systematic meaning of secularism, simply because they do not want “to accept this common truth that, “reality” in general cannot be accessible without shared conceptions communicated by words” (Brennan, 199). For Said, “all reality for us, insofar as we are humans and not gods; that is, reality may be physically independent of our thoughts” (Brennan, 199). *Beginnings*, as a complex book simply explores in a non-linear fashion the distinction between origins and beginnings by which Said also means the difference between religion and secularism (Brennan, 165). In fact, “beginning marks an ontological starting point, while origin underscores the impotence of human endeavor anchored by the divine word” (Brennan, 165).

In *Orientalism*, Said reveals through G.A.H Gibb,

“There have been among the Muslim peoples and that some of them were Arab philosophers, but they were rare exceptions. The Arab mind, whether in relation to the outer world or in relation to the processes of thought, cannot throw off its intense feeling for separateness and the individuality of the concrete events. This is I believe, one of the main factors lying behind that “lack of sense of law” ...the Muslims from the thought processes of rationalism... the rejection of rationalist modes of thought and the utilitarian “ethic” which is inseparable from them has its roots, therefore, not in the so-called “obscurantism” of the Muslim theologians but in the *atomism* and discreteness of the

Arab imagination...this is pure Orientalism, Gibb's inaugural biases remain a formidable obstacle for anyone hoping to understand modern ISLAM" (106).

The quote above indicates that Said was mostly interested in reviving metaphysics in the Arab world since according to Brennan, Said had written to his friend Sami with a *cri de coeur* "the Arabs since Avicenna and Ibn Khaldun (who borrowed from Aristotle have never produced a theory of mind, it would be a theme he returned to constantly, with ever more desperation and with a determination to set it right" (255).

Conclusion

In conclusion, one may say that Said was more of a philosopher than a literary theorist. Said introduced literary theorists because he wanted to exclude them from literary academia. In Said's mind, literary theorists have presented knowledge as a discontinuity rather than a continuity to disrupt the consciousness of the Arabs. For this reason, he turned to philosophers in order to establish the study of the philosophy of mind. According to Brennan, although Said seemed to be a political activist, part of him had a metaphysical cast of mind; he could not neglect philosophy in one way or another (68). Brennan argues that, Said was influenced by Constantine Zurayk's book *The Meaning of Disaster* who "scorned the literariness of Arabs as well as their absurd talent for expressing political fantasies in ornate language. Nevertheless, he too focused on *thaqafah* (culture) as the vehicle of social transformation" (185). On this basis, one may say that Said emerged as a representative of Nahda intellectuals who clearly made a case for writing as an act to speak truth to power.

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