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A Gendered Palestinization of Identity

An Arab Philosophy and Colonial-Modernity Perspective

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Supposing truth is a woman—what then? Are there not grounds for the suspicion that all philosophers, insofar as they were dogmatists, have been very inexpert about women? That the gruesome seriousness, the clumsy obtrusiveness with which they have usually approached truth so far have been awkward and very improper methods for winning a woman's heart? What is certain is that she has not allowed herself to be won—and today every kind of dogmatism is left standing dispirited and discouraged. If it is left standing at all! For there are scoffers who claim that it has fallen, that all dogmatism lies on the ground—even more, that all dogmatism is dying.

__ Friedrich Nietzsche, Beyond Good and Evil.

Abstract

This dissertation critically assesses questions that have long been raised about the adequacy of traditional philosophical canons for addressing the enduring social injustices faced by marginalized groups, particularly women. Key elements of this assessment are gleaned from an examination of salient features of patriarchal and matriarchal structures, the genesis and situatedness of otherness in Arab Eastern philosophy, and the effects of colonial modernity on identity. Together, these elements highlight the limitations associated with ascribing the persistence of the marginalization of minorities to the dominance of patriarchy and a Western orientation in philosophy, and they advocate for an approach to philosophical inquiry that is context-sensitive and inclusive of minority perspectives. By integrating Standpoint Theory, Situated Knowledges, Intersectionality, and Borderlands discourse, a nuanced framework is proposed for understanding identity, resistance, and justice. In addition to making the case for moving beyond binary constructions of patriarchy and matriarchy, the concept of a "humanness continuum" is proposed as a means of reconciling feminist theories of gender performativity with biological determinism. This continuum situates individuals along a spectrum of maleness and femaleness—a construction that renders the biological determinism of gender not inconsistent with the fluidity of gender roles or gender identities. In addition, Ibn Khaldûn's concept of *'Asabiyyah* (group solidarity) is deployed to propose an explanation of the seemingly inevitable otherness and marginalization of minorities in social structures. This explanation, which Arab philosophy roots in the existence of differentness, also serves to shed light on the factors that underlie the orientalist besmirchment with which the West tends to view the East, as well as the latter's resistance to it and coping with it. In this connection, the impact of colonial modernity on Palestinian identity is explored, particularly through the prism of *palestinization*—a concept that is proposed to portray Palestinian identity under Israeli occupation as an anomalous condition akin to borderland life, and to underscore the manipulation of identity and language to perpetuate subjugation, as well as the need for the reclamation of identity as a means of empowerment and resistance.

Dedication

To Nawāl Sa'adāwī,

whace words continue to resonate within me like a soft breeze on a burning day. I wish she were still here to share the culmination of this journey with me, but I know her presence transcends the boundaries of life itself. She remains infinite—a force of wisdom and strength enduring beyond her time on earth. To her, I dedicate this work, hoping it carries even a drop of her immeasurable contributions to the ultimate cause of women empowerment across the world.

To my children—Hiva, Abdelnour, Yasmina, and Serena—

for without them, I might have wandered aimlessly through life, searching for meaning. With them, I found purpose—a fountain of unstoppable drive for knowledge, propelling me to seek, learn, and grow. Being a mother has profoundly shaped the woman I am today, instilling in me a deep sense of love, tenderness, belief, and an unwavering will to be.

Acknowledgments

When I began this dissertation, I was navigating a space filled with questions—seeking solutions for a better world and trying to answer the persistent inquiries that have always lived within me. Questions of inequality and injustice in a universe created with such delicate balance constantly stirred my thoughts.

I have always appreciated being born female, marveling at the capacity of the womb to carry life. Yet, I have never underestimated the male's role in initiating the life nurtured and fostered within the womb. I have admired the mingling of East and West—a harmonious blend that fascinated me in its interplay of colors, cultures, and contributions. To me, the "other" was someone with whom one could meet, exchange ideas, and build a better future.

I wasn't naïve in thinking that the world could easily become a better place; I just deeply believed it *must* be a better place. Little did I know how far we were from that reality. I once thought the savagery and brutality of wars were relics of the past—that humanity had advanced enough to heal its wounds without further bloodshed. I was wrong. Yet, I still hold to the belief that history, with all its force, remains cyclical. Civilizations never remain at their peak of glory forever. As Ibn Khaldûn's cyclical theory suggests, sovereign powers are born; they grow, mature, and eventually die. His concept of ʿ*Asabiyyah* —the rise and fall of empires—teaches us this lesson repeatedly.

However, as the race for existence takes the form of erasure, annihilation, and the systematic wiping away of the "other," it feels strange to persist with this academic exercise—

searching for answers about a better existence. We no longer have the privilege of contemplating the values of male and female for a better society, nor of exploring how the East and West can create a beautiful waltz together. Instead, we are confronted with a state of *palestinization*—a condition that extends beyond the Palestinian experience under colonial occupation. It has become a global phenomenon, fueled by capitalist and imperialist superiority cloaked in Western modernity. In this hierarchy, a specific race is positioned as superior, while all "others" are palestinized—erased if they fail to conform to the order of racial dominance.

Throughout this journey, I have encountered incredible individuals who walked with me at every step. Some remain with us, while others left this world years, decades, or even centuries ago. Some spoke to me through their works, enriching my mind and spirit, fortifying my knowledge. Every time I stumbled upon an idea, I found myself held in a fall that only strengthened me when I rose again. From Judith Butler to Hannah Arendt, Simone de Beauvoir to Sandra Harding, Donna Haraway, Gloria Anzaldúa, and Kimberlé Crenshaw—each paved the way for thinkers like Luce Irigaray and Nawāl Saʿadāwī, whose words gave me that deep, assuring breath: *This is what I've been searching for*, though it was never quite *exactly* what I wanted to say.

At times, I felt grounded by Nietzsche's call for strength through adversity, Kierkegaard's leap of faith that confronts doubt, and the Socratic compass that always returns to questioning. Pythagoras offered a vision of universal harmony, while the Brethren of Purity provided a pause—an invitation to reflect, to seek unity amidst complexity. Each of these voices became guideposts as I navigated the labyrinth of thought and history.

Still, I sometimes wonder if this relentless pursuit of balance reveals something dismissive in my character, something I am only now uncovering amid the shadows of war. My yearning for

harmony feels misplaced in a time so defined by division, where there are no spaces for waltzing, no openness—only barriers and borders. Yet, I hold onto the belief that balance, even now, is not entirely lost. It exists, perhaps, in fragments, waiting to be rediscovered.

I imagine that balance when I look to the East and West, blending in an ideal of mutual respect. I see it in Andalusia—a living testament to cultural symbiosis—or as I walk the old streets of Jerusalem. Within a square kilometer, one can trace the echoes of civilizations: Canaanite, Jebusite, Babylonian, Egyptian, Assyrian, Persian, Roman, Byzantine, Arab, Crusader, and Ottoman. The interweaving of cultures simultaneously inspires and threatens; we imitate and draw from others even as we declare them the "other."

Perhaps this is why I wrestled with al-Ghazali, who, though he comprehended and even engaged with Greek philosophy, sought to shield it from the masses—reserving it for those he deemed magicians or physicians capable of transforming poison into medicine. The tension between embracing and resisting the "other" has always been a paradox.

This journey has been filled with moments of exhilaration—"This is it!"—only to be followed by "But it's not exactly." Luce Irigaray's theories on the womb and sex? Illuminating, but not entirely. Nawāl Saʿadāwī's goddesses? Empowering, yet not quite. Edward Said's *Orientalism*? Foundational, but postcolonialism alone doesn't suffice. Rita Segato's analysis of colonial modernity? Close, but occupation adds layers of complexity. Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble*? Transformative, yet still not wholly encompassing. Simone de Beauvoir's assertion—"One is not born but becomes a woman"? Profound, but it misses a nuance I cannot ignore.

Each framework offered a vital piece, a situated perspective, yet each also revealed its limits. In the end, it all ties back to the notion of situated knowledge—a web of interconnected threads that together form a larger understanding. Gender trouble, after all, is also identity trouble. And in a

world striving for inclusivity, diversity, and justice, it is this identity trouble that demands our confrontation—not to erase differences, but to embrace them as part of a shared human story. A story that allows each individual the freedom to define and express who they truly are.

To Begonya, my supervisor, I owe a debt of gratitude. Her trust and insight caught hold of an idea I could barely articulate myself. With unwavering support and encouragement, she helped me weave this journey with passion, string-figuring philosophy from every thread of situated knowledge, crossing borderlands, and intertwining principles, beliefs, and doubt. Her guidance gave me the confidence to navigate intersections of uncertainty and discovery, and for that, I am deeply thankful.

I would like to extend my gratitude to the *Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona* and the Department of Philosophy for providing a vibrant and inspiring intellectual environment that fostered my growth throughout this journey. The department's dedication to critical inquiry and interdisciplinary exploration was instrumental in shaping the framework of this work. I am especially thankful for the guidance, support, and resources that enabled me to bring this dissertation to fruition.

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Introduction and Methodology

Despite the crucial role [women] play in all fields of economic and social endeavor in the factories, fields, social services, different professions, and at home—and the fact that they represent half the population in each country—their representation within the political power structure is always limited to a minority, and sometimes even a very restricted minority. Freedom for women will never be achieved unless they unite into an organized political force powerful enough, conscious enough, and dynamic enough to truly represent half of society. To my mind, the real reason why women have been unable to complete their emancipation, even in socialist countries, is that they have failed to constitute themselves into a political force powerful, conscious, and dynamic enough to impose their rights.

___ Nawāl Saʿadāwī. *The Hidden Face of Eve*

1. Introduction

I was born a woman in Jerusalem. I have always identified as a Palestinian woman, and as far back as I can recall, I have been living with the consequences of these two defining identity elements being my own. No matter, hardly any privileges attached to either identity element in a patriarchal social order under a capricious and oppressive colonial rule. I have always been at once a member of multiple marginalized classes, and, going through my personal and professional life journey, I had to cope with various forms of injustice that came with being a minority. Whether a minority in the sense of belonging to the women half of the population, or to the entire Palestinian population under occupation, I felt I was that threatening or not so threatening "other" who had to be excluded, if not altogether canceled.

In my first meeting with her,[1] and upon seeing me struggle with finding the words to adequately capture the full weight of injustice that came with being a Palestinian woman, the famed Egyptian philosopher Nawāl Saʿadāwī issued me a passionate enjoinder to write. In writing, she said, you will find yourself free of living in anyone else's shadow, adding: "you will be the captain of your own soul."

Those powerful words of encouragement, or, as they felt more like it at the time, admonishment, inspired me to write my first novel, *In the Shadow of Men* (2016). In that novel, as well as my other creative writings, I was more reflexive than reflective in that I sought to convey images of the reality of injustice endured by Palestinian women as I saw and perceived it. But throughout, I felt a growing urge to rigorously pursue important questions regarding the sources and nature of injustice endured by Palestinian women, the power asymmetries that underlay the administration of that injustice, and the constructions and means through which the agents of injustice could be effectively resisted.

That is what led me to consider working on this research project, and philosophy was a compelling choice of realm to begin my pursuit with. After all, philosophy has been a most acclaimed and challenging field of human intellectual pursuit since time immemorial, and issues related to women, their roles, and their societal status have concomitantly been a central issue of interest in philosophical discourse. That, in turn, virtually immediately led me to wonder why the "arc of justice" never seemed to adequately bend in the direction of viewing women as full-fledged human beings, fully entitled to all the rights and privileges that derived from their humanness.

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[1] The meeting, the purpose of which was to discuss my MA thesis with her, took place in Cairo in December 2015.

In trying to address this important question, I started by questioning the adequacy of philosophical canons from the point of view of, on the one hand, the preponderance of patriarchal philosophical approaches and, on the other hand, the oversized role of Western thinkers and philosophers in shaping the contours of what is to be regarded as normal or acceptable. But, in parallel, I thought it was important not to limit the scope of my inquiry to such an examination.

Specifically, I thought it may be helpful to expand the scope of the inquiry to cover three interrelated domains. These revolve around an examination of: (1) the root causes that may underlie the injustice endured by women, (2) the extent to which such causes may explain the injustice endured by other minorities, and (3) the question of how, in a broad sense, minorities come to be viewed as "threatening others." Finally, it was in connection with seeking to explore how Arab philosophers of the Golden Muslim Era dealt with the latter question, in particular, that I thought it useful to address the question of the existence and validity of Arab Eastern philosophy.[2]

As to the question of the possible inadequacy of the philosophical canons for addressing the injustice endured by women, I will examine the hypothesis that posits that the skewed views on norms are due to the dominance of patriarchal philosophical approaches. Specifically, I will seek to find out whether contributions to philosophical discourse that specifically sought to make the case for adopting a matriarchal approach to philosophy were as impactful as is commonly held. This question arises because some,

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[2] Throughout this thesis, terms such as "Arab philosophy," "Islamic philosophy," and "Arab Eastern philosophy" are used interchangeably. This is done to acknowledge the shared intellectual tradition that includes philosophers who were not necessarily Arab or Muslim but who contributed to the same philosophical corpus. These terms collectively refer to the rich and diverse body of thought that emerged from the cultural and intellectual milieu of the Islamic Golden Age and beyond, encompassing scholars of various ethnicities and religious backgrounds who engaged with and contributed to this tradition.

particularly women philosophers, were not even considered philosophers to begin with, while others approached the issue through the constructions of patriarchal approaches to philosophy. There is also the more important question of whether it was, in the first instance, right to presume the validity of projecting the concept of matriarchy as though it were a rival to, or as the opposite of, patriarchy. In this connection, I agree with Luce Irigaray who, in her classic, *An Ethics of Sexual Difference* (1993), underscores the erroneousness of presuming the existence of a womanhood-manhood dichotomous duality.[3]

I similarly will examine the inadequacy of philosophical canons that is alleged to derive from the dominance of Western thinkers in philosophical discourse before turning to the question of the adequacy of the agents of change in the process of humanizing women. Essentially, the issue here is this: Assuming there was nothing wrong with the philosophical approach, what might have gone wrong with efforts made by agents of change, notably the feminist movement, in eradicating the root causes of injustice that continue to befall women throughout the world?

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[3] Luce Irigaray (1930–) is renowned for her theory of "sexual difference," which critiques the supposedly neutral concept of the subject or ego in Western philosophy and psychoanalytic theory, exposing how it inherently prioritizes male perspectives and interests. In this framework, women are relegated to the status of the non-subject (the Other) or are aligned with matter and nature. Irigaray contends that Western culture lacks genuine heterosexuality, as it predominantly reflects the perspective of the male subject, particularly within domains such as law, religion, political theory, philosophy, and art. Irigaray's project attempts to introduce two sexed subjects and to call for the development of a culture and ethics that would do justice to both. See Mary Beth Mader, "Luce Irigaray," *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, April 19, 2024, https://www.britannica.com/biography/Luce-Irigaray.

Irigaray's early work espouses Feminism of "sexual difference" differently from her later works. In her early work, "sexual difference" referred to the difference between male and female as socially constructed identities within the symbolic order of culture and meaning, distinct from biological differences. Later, Irigaray revalued female identity, matter, and embodiment as culturally conceived, challenging the traditional hierarchy that privileged male-identified culture over female-associated nature. See Alison Stone, *Luce Irigaray and the Philosophy of Sexual Difference* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

Given the similarities I perceive in the operations of various agents of injustice, I will also extensively explore elements of colonial rule that made the status of Palestinian women living under Israeli occupation a case study on how a confluence of factors related to the Palestinian patriarchal social order and the occupation regime has led to the emergence of a condition that I call *palestinization*. I define that condition as the effects and consequences of the operation of forces that lead to extremely severe forms of injustice and, simultaneously, to acts of resistance to them.

2. Methodology

As to my choice of methodology, this research project is based on the Situated Knowledges methodology that supports Donna Haraway's idea that "positioning is the key practice in grounding knowledge organized around the imagery of vision"(Haraway 1988, 587), with positioning being about more than merely bringing a point of view to a process that seeks knowledge and aspires to effect change. Rather, according to Haraway, positioning is a process that begins with being situated somewhere, but it then proceeds to iteratively evolve (Haraway 2004, 91). This comes across clearly in her viewing knowledge seekers as active participants in, and thus answerable for, what they learn how to see, as well as in her consideration of Situated Knowledges being about communities rather than isolated individuals.

It was this aspect of Situated Knowledges approach that made a methodology inspired by it an appropriate choice for the purposes of my research. Both my strong sense of identity and life experience did situate me "somewhere in particular," and they provided me with the "imagery of a vision." But to find a holistic and more

encompassing vision, I had to engage in positioning precisely in the way Haraway conceptualized it.

As is explained later in this opening chapter, that process of positioning begins with an examination of knowledge from the perspective of situated standpoints, and then it proceeds by deploying a String-figuring approach to focus on the multitude of factors that ultimately determine and shape existing realities. Such is the method through which I seek to transition in this research endeavor from a perspective determined and shaped by my own sense of identity, societal affiliation, location, and experience to a larger vision that encompasses the world around me.

The pursuit of a "larger vision," in the way I describe it here, is necessary if the knowledge we so acquire is to inform the formulation of policies capable of addressing the exclusion that, over the past few decades, has been progressively turning our world into a totalitarian singularity of nations, where everyone who is not "us" is seen as the undesirable "other." This is how I believe we can speak out for the unspoken histories and, thus, tell our stories in a way that could hopefully lead to promoting ideas and philosophies that can advance the cause of a harmonious cohabitation with equality, equity, universality, freedom, and peace for all.

3.   Research Questions and Goals

The primary aim of this research is to critically examine the prevailing hypothesis that attributes the failure of philosophical canons to effectively address the social injustices experienced by women and other minorities solely to the dominance of patriarchal discourse in philosophy. I will do so by reviewing the contributions of notable

thinkers[4] who, by promoting this hypothesis, opened the door for thinking that an

antithetical matriarchal approach to philosophy could provide a better perspective

through which the persistence of social injustice may be viewed.

Without presuming the validity, or even the mere existence, of such a dichotomy

in philosophical canons, I thought that examining the hypothesis in question, as well as

that which attributes the alleged inadequacy of philosophical canons to the dominance of

a Western perspective in philosophy, might be helpful in acquiring knowledge that could

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[4] Examples of philosophers who contributed to matriarchal philosophical thinking include Nawāl Sa'adāwī, Mary Daly, Luce Irigaray, Merlin Stone, Hélène Cixous, and Chiara Bottici.

Mary Daly (1928-2010): Daly was an influential figure in the development of feminist theory, especially in radical or anarcha-Feminism. Her later work became explicitly anarchist in nature, rejecting all forms of hierarchy and authority. Daly argued that patriarchal structures, including religion, have historically oppressed women, and that women must reclaim their power by developing their own spirituality and rejecting patriarchal norms. In *Gyn/Ecology: The Metaethics of Radical Feminism* (1978), she critiques patriarchal religion and explores goddess worship as a model for a more egalitarian society. In *Beyond God the Father: Toward a Philosophy of Women's Liberation* (1973), Daly argues that patriarchal religion has served as a tool of oppression and calls for a feminist spirituality as a means of liberation. Daly's works advocate for the destruction of oppressive institutions and the creation of women-centered spaces free from male influence.

Merlin Stone (1931-2011): An American author and artist, Stone is best known for her work *When God Was a Woman*(1976), which explores the role of women in ancient societies and argues that many early religions worshipped a female deity. Her work challenges patriarchal interpretations of history and religion, advocating for recognition of women's significant roles in prehistoric societies. Stone's contribution to feminist theory lies in her analysis of goddess worship and the role of women as priestesses and leaders in ancient societies. Her work highlights that the oppression of women is not biologically inevitable but rather a social construct perpetuated by patriarchal systems. Stone's emphasis on reclaiming women's voices and experiences from ancient history has had a lasting impact on feminist and spiritual movements.

Hélène Cixous (born 1937): A French philosopher and feminist theorist, Cixous is renowned for her concept of "écriture féminine" (feminine writing), which challenges patriarchal language and literature. Her seminal work, *The Laugh of the Medusa* (1975), advocates for women to express their unique perspectives through writing, thus challenging the male-dominated literary tradition. Cixous emphasizes the exploration of feminine subjectivity and the creation of a language that empowers women to assert their own identities, critiquing the ways male-dominated language has historically silenced women's experiences.

Chiara Bottici (born 1975): An Italian feminist and anarchist philosopher, Bottici has made significant contributions to anarcha-feminist theory, focusing on the intersections between gender oppression, Capitalism, and the state. In "Bodies in Plural: Towards an Anarcha-Feminist Manifesto" (2017), Bottici outlines a revolutionary vision of anarcha-Feminism that rejects both patriarchal structures and capitalist systems. She emphasizes the need for feminist movements to be grounded in the lived experiences of marginalized groups and calls for the creation of alternative institutions based on mutual aid and direct democracy (Bottici 2017, 91-111).

inform the quest for new ways to address our world's mounting problems. This is especially important at a time when the world is turning into separate, radical, and polarized tribes, due in no small measure to a significant rise in South-to-North (or East-to-West) migration that has undoubtedly led to already marginalized groups, notably women, but also sexual minorities within migrant communities, becoming even more marginalized and threatened.

The rise in immigration and the subsequent backlash against it in the West highlight the intersectional nature of marginalization, particularly affecting minorities who, like me, belong to multiple marginalized categories. This Intersectionality is crucial in understanding the broader context of social injustice, and it informs the direction of this research. Therefore, my unique position, at the intersection of multiple marginalized identities, drives my pursuit of a broader vision—a world where the recognition of the inherent humanness of the "other" becomes the foundation for coexistence in societies that celebrate diversity and prioritize inclusiveness.

In my pursuit of that quest through positioning, I will not rely solely on exploring ideas and thoughts regarding the desirability of adopting a more diverse philosophical approach to the study of minority issues, but also on looking into events and stories that shed light on the context that shaped the discourse on these matters. This means looking into some personal accounts of who, what, where, and why, with a view to understanding the genesis of that discourse and its relevance to this research project.

Beyond examining the limitations of the aforementioned hypotheses concerning the inadequacy of philosophical canons in addressing the marginalization of women and other minorities, I will also explore the complex interplay of twentieth-century

Colonialism, colonialist, and post-colonial intellectual discourses. Specifically, I will analyze how concepts such as Colonial-Modernity and the 'rule-and-obey' paradigm have further complicated the understanding of issues related to minority status, with a particular focus on women. Specifically, the focus will be on how these influences have conspired to magnify the power asymmetries entailed by patriarchal social structures and perhaps also by the adoption of predominantly patriarchal philosophical approaches in studying minority-related issues.

Driven at the personal level by a literary passion for writing and reading fiction and nonfiction literature, I have brought a humanistic research perspective to the academic work and cognitive theories undertaken and covered in this research project, with a view to having it contribute better to our lives. After all, scientific inquiry is meant to find answers and solutions to life matters and problems, to expand knowledge, and to deploy it in furtherance of the human condition.

It was in that vein that Haraway helped to pioneer a new kind of knowledge anchored on the ability to think from inside the so-called natural sciences while simultaneously undertaking a critical assessment of the state of knowledge in a given field. This was to make it possible for researchers to look for both words and worlds together; to look at discourses, histories, meanings, and human entanglements; and also, to work at what it was that scientists were interested in.

A pioneer in the emerging feminist theory in the seventies and eighties of the twentieth century, Haraway, as she maintains, was not only concerned with where the women were but also with taking a second look at the famous enlightenment figure- Man-, who was supposed to be generic; a neutral figure, with no class, race, gender,

nationality, or religion, but who could stand above the world and understand and control the world without any entanglement in it. That figure of enlightenment, according to Haraway, has evolved to become a central theme in academic discourse. This approach, which was adopted—since Mary Wollstonecraft's seminal work[5]— in the contributions of Donna Haraway, Sandra Harding, Judith Butler, Gloria Anzaldúa, and others, allowed us to think again in a critical way. Instead of detachment being a hallmark of scientific inquiry, Haraway suggests that all knowledge was situated in several kinds of 'apparatuses': the close apparatuses of the scientific experiments and the laboratories and the not-quite-so-close 'apparatuses' that make science possible the way it is in particular times and places (Haraway 2015).

In some ways, scientists can think about this the same way they do about including a 'sources and methods' section in any scientific article. It would not be considered good science if sources and methods were left out. So, the need for situating knowledge is compelled by the need to precisely specify how it is that we know anything. Otherwise, unless knowledge is situated, scientific inquiry risks being reduced to identifying research findings and projecting them as if, somehow, they constituted some transcendent truth—something that Haraway rightly

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[5] Mary Wollstonecraft (1759–1797), best known for her *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792), Wollstonecraft's influence extended beyond her substantial contributions to Feminism. Her work also helped shape travel writing as a literary genre. Wollstonecraft's reflections on the status of women were part of a broader attempt to comprehend human relations within a civilization increasingly dominated by acquisitiveness and consumption. For more on Wollstonecraft's life and influence, see Sylvana Tomaselli, "Mary Wollstonecraft," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, Spring 2020 edition, https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2020/entries/wollstonecraft/.

challenges and uses as a basis for her claim that new kinds of knowledge must always be situated at many different levels (Haraway 2015).

As noted earlier, a central hypothesis underlying this research project is that adopting a more diverse philosophical approach to the study of minority issues can help better inform strategies aimed at the attainment of more inclusive and, hence, stronger societies. However, that may not be sufficient. Specifically, neither a matriarchal approach, one rooted in the contributions of Eastern thinkers, or a combination thereof may be enough. Instead, only if such a broadening of perspective is accompanied by deploying Situated Knowledges methods through, for example, an examination of the root cause that underlies the existence of "the threatening other," which almost always triggers and fuels a desire to exclude, would there be a realistic chance of bringing about a much-improved sense of togetherness and community in any society. This thesis ultimately argues for the recognition of the inherent humanness of all individuals as the primary guiding principle in establishing norms for managing societal relations, both within and across nations.

4. Research Design and Organization

This research adopts a multi-faceted theoretical approach that combines several key frameworks to analyze the complexities of oppression, resistance, and identity formation. The central frameworks employed in this study include Standpoint theory, Situated Knowledges, String-figuring, and Intersectionality. These frameworks contribute unique insights that, together, allow for a comprehensive analysis of the issues at hand.

The design of this project adopts a String-figuring approach, where patterns are relayed between various participants, allowing for a dynamic and evolving analysis of the interconnectedness of oppression and resistance. In this process, threads may be dropped, patterns may unravel, or new patterns may emerge, creating opportunities for new possibilities and insights (O'Neill-Butler 2016).This approach is particularly effective in examining the interconnectedness of various forms of oppression and resistance, allowing for a dynamic and evolving analysis.

At the conceptual level, the research is qualitative, focused on understanding human behavior from the informant's perspective, assuming a dynamic and negotiated reality. This approach is also concerned with discovering facts about social phenomena, particularly the various forms of exclusion that the "other" experiences.

In challenging conventional wisdom, this research engages with contradictions while resisting the negative implications of normative power dynamics. Centuries of modernity, Imperialism, Colonialism, and white supremacy have constructed rigid class structures and racial categorizations, often resulting in distorted criticism and limiting the impact of feminist anti-racist praxis (Haraway 2015).

To rethink the complex meanings of "difference" outside of contemporary Western feminist contexts and provide historical and intellectual context, this thesis uses Standpoint theory as a guiding methodological approach. Standpoint theory, promoted by feminist epistemologists,[6] suggests that an individual's social group memberships,

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[6] Feminist Epistemologies: Feminist epistemology uses gender as an analytic category in discussions and reconstructions of epistemic norms and practices, with a core focus on the concept of situated knowledge. Three main approaches emerged: feminist standpoint theory, feminist postmodernism, and feminist empiricism. Feminist Standpoint theory, introduced in the 1970s and 1980s, is both an epistemology of science and a critical theory aimed at empowering oppressed groups. Key figures include Dorothy E. Smith, Nancy Hartsock, Sandra Harding, Patricia Hill Collins, Alison Wylie, and Donna Haraway. Harding developed feminist standpoint theory in philosophy, Hartsock in political science, and Smith in sociology. Harding also employed Marxist analysis to develop a feminist

location, experience, and situated knowledge influence his/her perspective, and vice versa. It contributes significantly to feminist discourse and to contemporary scientific, philosophical, and political discussions.

Standpoint theory also provides a means of empowering oppressed groups by valuing their experiences and developing an 'oppositional consciousness' (Harding 2004,2). Initially proposed as a feminist critical theory, Standpoint theory challenges the assumption that Feminism obstructs scientific knowledge production, offering instead a prescriptive methodology to guide future feminist research (Harding 2004).

Moreover, Standpoint theory helps bring about a better understanding of the ongoing debates on Colonialism, post-Colonialism, modernity, and Imperialism within a context dominated by patriarchy. It explains how certain kinds of politics can stimulate and guide knowledge production rather than hinder it (Harding 2004). While this thesis examines the possible existence of a matriarchal philosophy, Standpoint theory sets the stage for such exploration by asserting that women's movements needed knowledge that

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version of standpoint theory, alongside Smith, who critiqued mainstream sociology for its male-centered bias. Hartsock contributed to theorizing the sexual division of labor and its global political-economic dynamics, while Wylie examined how power relations influence knowledge, both empirically and conceptually. Collins highlighted the connection between standpoint theory and Black feminist thought, and Haraway's work on Situated Knowledge*s* emphasized how social location shapes knowledge production.
Notable works include:
Sandra Harding, *The Science Question in Feminism* (1986), *The Feminist Standpoint Theory Reader: Intellectual and Political Controversies* (2004), *Objectivity and Diversity: Another Logic of Scientific Research* (2015).
Nancy Hartsock, *Money, Sex, and Power: Toward a Feminist Historical Materialism* (1983), *The Feminist Standpoint: Developing the Ground for a Specifically Feminist Historical Materialism* (1983), *The Feminist Standpoint Revisited and Other Essays* (1998).
Dorothy E. Smith, *Feminism and Marxism: A Place to Begin, A Way to Go* (1977), *The Conceptual Practices of Power: A Feminist Sociology of Knowledge* (1990).
Alison Wylie, *Why Standpoint Theory Matters: Feminist Standpoint Theory* (2003).
Donna Haraway, *Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective*(1988), *Capitalocene, Chthulucene—Staying with the Trouble: Form and Rhetoric in the Discourse of the Anthropocene* (2016).

was for women, transforming them from mere objects of inquiry to subjects and authors of knowledge (Harding 2004).

When Standpoint theory first emerged in the seventies of the twentieth century, it was according to Harding, "a feminist critical theory about relations between the production of knowledge and practices of power… [it] challenged the assumption that Feminism as a political movement does not obstruct and damage the production of scientific knowledge" (Harding 2004, 1). Therefore, Harding maintains that rather than just an explanatory, the theory was proposed "also prescriptively as a method or theory of method (a methodology) to guide future feminist research" (Harding 2004, 1).

Unlike Standpoint theory, which attributes epistemological privilege to subjugated knowledges, or the sociology of knowledge, which, in turn, attributes this privilege to those in the right structural position vis-à-vis a given mode of production, Haraway argues that it is Situated Knowledges that problematizes both subject and object, attributing privilege to partiality. This shift underscores the dynamic and hybrid nature of Situated Knowledges, which takes the position of the knower seriously and involves 'mobile positioning' (Haraway 1991,192).

Haraway further contends that in Situated Knowledges, based on embodied vision, subjects who experience cannot be treated as innocent of violations of language and culture. She cautions against romanticizing the perfect subjugated subject, arguing that this approach fails to address the violence inherent in dominant epistemologies. Haraway emphasizes that experience is a crucial product and means of the women's movement, urging us to struggle over the terms of articulation because "Through the politically explosive terrain of linked experience, feminists make connections and enter

into movement. Complexity, heterogeneity, specific positioning, and power-charged

difference are not the same thing as liberal pluralism" (Haraway 1991, 109).

In addition to the valuable insights provided by Standpoint theory, String-figuring,

and Situated Knowledges, this thesis also employs Intersectionality as an analytical tool.

Intersectionality, as introduced by Kimberlé Crenshaw,[7] is crucial for understanding the

compounded forms of marginalization that arise when various forms of discrimination

intersect. The sharp rise in South-to-North migration in recent years has highlighted the

cascading effects of different forms of affliction endured by minority groups within

migrant communities.

In the Palestinian context, the multifaceted and multilayered discrimination and

oppression faced by Palestinian women and other minorities under Israeli colonial

occupation necessitate a holistic and complex understanding of injustice, which can only

be achieved through Intersectionality. The term *palestinization*, which I defined earlier in

this chapter, extends the concept of Intersectionality beyond interactions between

different forms of discrimination to include the roles played by various agents of

oppression. For example, while the Israeli colonial occupation views all Palestinians as

the "other" to be excluded, the Palestinian Authority mainly subjects women to an

inferior standard of justice.

5. Research Problems and Limitations

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[7] Kimberlé Crenshaw (b.1959) is a civil rights advocate and a legal scholar who coined the term "intersectionality" to explain overlapping systems of oppression.

In an era where global changes are no longer confined to environmental or climatic concerns, but also include significant shifts in migration patterns from East to West, and geopolitical struggles over resources such as energy, societies are transforming rapidly. Historian Peter Novick has noted that "'Historical objectivity' is not a single idea, but rather a sprawling collection of assumptions, attitudes, aspirations, and antipathies" (Novick 1988, 1). Following his perspective, I contend that an uncritical appeal to the concept of historical objectivity risks overlooking the ideological biases and motives that inevitably influence historical accounts.

Rather than pursuing objectivity in the abstract, the focus should be on how research addresses the interests, needs, fears, and desires of the people it concerns, and on whether it can offer a window for possible change or assess the adequacy of existing policies. Consequently, defining what constitutes scientific research becomes crucial. If we conceive of philosophy as 'natural philosophy,' we allow ourselves to explore the meaning of nature in our research, bringing it closer to real-life matters and making it alive, rather than treating it as a mere subject for academic inquiry. At the same time, it is essential to maintain the distinctions that define sciences according to research criteria.

Sandra Harding has argued that the proposed criteria to "distinguish Science from science have all withered away under the rigorous critical scrutiny of philosophers, historians, sociologists, and ethnographers of science as well as scientists themselves" (Harding 2015, x-xi). Nevertheless, she acknowledges that each proposed criterion—whether it involves a distinctive method, a critical attitude toward traditional belief, a unique language, or a particular metaphysics—has contributed to the historical advancement of scientific knowledge (Harding 2015, x-xi).

Such advancements in scientific knowledge enhance our ability to develop strategies for creating more diverse, inclusive, and stronger societies. As we attempt to define sciences and distinguish them, the question of "who" arises—not only about who the scientist is but also about the group the scientist is working on. According to Harding, this diversity "fully respects the values and interests of all citizens while protecting those of the most economically and politically vulnerable groups" (Harding 2015, xi). She also asserts that social justice movements have highlighted the limitations of even the best scientific methodologies, as they have often failed to prevent discriminatory values from shaping highly regarded research (Harding 2015, xii).

Novick's reservations about the pursuit of objectivity and neutrality in scientific inquiry underscore the validity of applying the methodologies of Situated Knowledges and Standpoint theory. Without these approaches, research findings are unlikely to contribute meaningfully to policy frameworks that address the needs of marginalized groups and promote social justice, societal harmony, and inclusion.

Harding reinforces this point by reflecting on her experience in feminist work, where she spoke not only from her own experiences but also from what she perceived to be a collective women's experience. She emphasizes that the idea of speaking only for oneself is a dangerous delusion, particularly for those who occupy dominant positions in society (Harding, 2015 lecture).

These challenges are particularly acute for feminists in postcolonial contexts, but, as Harding notes, having problems to grapple with is what enables us to think, engage, and move forward, even when we cannot fully resolve them. Yet, as Harding acknowledges, finding satisfactory solutions remains a challenge, as the sciences'

commitment to social neutrality has often limited the potential of politically engaged

research to benefit oppressed groups (Harding 2004, 5).

Harding asserts that

the sciences' commitment to social neutrality disarmed the scientifically
productive potential of politically engaged research on behalf of oppressed groups
and, more generally, the culturally important projects of all but the dominant
Western, bourgeois, white-supremacist, androcentric, heteronormative culture.
Commitment to objectivity, defined as maximizing social neutrality, was not itself
socially neutral in its effects{…}the feminist research projects, which were
guided by politics and thus also socially situated, often produced empirically more
accurate accounts and expanded the horizons of human knowledge. The
"goodness" of "good science," feminist or not, was inadequately understood by
mainstream philosophy of science, epistemology, and methodology Standpoint
theorists argued. (Harding 2004, 5)

For Harding, Standpoint theory, along with postmodernist and some postcolonial

approaches, may appear to share a debilitating relativism. It acknowledges that all

knowledge claims are socially situated. Such a standpoint creates anxieties that require

extended attention. That is why Harding suggests that relativist fears can be set aside for

a while by considering conceptual frameworks, research methods, and research content

alongside the areas where values and interests shape the direction. Hence, by taking these

points into consideration, the empirical or theoretical quality of the research should not be

affected (Harding 2004, 11).

Sexual, gendered, racial, and other minorities have questioned the philosophical

canons adopted in the West. A serious intellectual and philosophical debate between the

East and the West can be usefully pursued since finding information that adds to the

existing philosophical knowledge is yet to occur. The relationship between the East and

the West remained a consequence of a post-colonial era, where, through an orientalist

perspective, the East was perceived as unable to contribute to the sophisticated West.

Ironically, philosophical canons in the West maintained a patriarchal approach to

philosophy by both men and women, with movements like Feminism also keeping the

patriarchal structure of morality and applying Existentialism as a philosophical inquiry.

From Feminism's beginnings, its Standpoint theorists had to struggle, along with

other feminists and members of other social justice movements, to create a distinctive

decentered subject of knowledge and history that was anticipated by Enlightenment or

Marxian analyses. Harding explains that

> women of color's work has been vital in developing notions of 'intersectional'
> social locations where oppressive hierarchical structures of gender, class, race and
> other anti-democratic projects intersect in diverse ways for different groups. And
> women of color have led the way in envisioning coalitions of decentered subjects
> of knowledge and history whose everyday experiences are discovered and forged
> through shared political projects. (Harding 2004, 8)

Harding asserts that systematic ignorance and error about the lives of the

oppressed have been ensured through such androcentric, economically advantaged, racist,

Eurocentric, and heterosexist conceptual frameworks. Among the questions she, in that

connection, raises and attempts to find answers to by researching the dominant

institutions and their customs and practices, especially their conceptual practices, are:

"Who benefits when standards for rationality are restricted to the instrumental rationality

of those sciences and public institutions from the design and management of which

women, the poor, and people of non-Western descent are barred?"(Harding 2004, 5)

"What social processes made reasonable the belief that women made no contributions to

human evolution?" (Harding 2004, 4-5)

For the purpose of this study, comparing Jean-Paul Sartre and Simone de

Beauvoir as pioneer Western thinkers of the 20th century can be used to check out and

trace the philosophical canons that the West supported by both men and women thinkers. Despite offering theories in social, political, and economic change that promote equality and freedom, the fact remains that their opinions were rooted in a patriarchal approach to philosophy that eschewed the potential for a matriarchal approach, in and off of itself, to contribute autonomously, rather than in a subservient or substitutive fashion in relation to the patriarchal approach, to the advancement of philosophical theories on various levels.

From the other side, examining the contributions of May Ziyadah and Gibran Khalil Jibran from the early 20th century, as well as Nawāl Saʻadāwī and Edward Said — themselves East-to-West migrants and refugees—as pioneer Eastern thinkers of the same era, is essential to providing added insights. All came from and lived in colonially affected countries and heavily experienced tribal and extreme environments that continue to plague the world. Ziyadah set up grounds for equality and social change theories together with Jibran.[8]

For their part, Said and Saʻadāwī were trailblazers in their advocacy for parting with the orthodoxy in philosophy in two distinct, but perhaps related, ways, with Said

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[8] While this thesis does not delve into the contributions of May Ziyadah (1886–1941) and Gibran Khalil Jibran (1883–1931), it is important to acknowledge their roles as pivotal Eastern thinkers of the early 20th century. Both Ziyadah and Jibran hailed from colonially impacted regions and grappled with the complexities of colonial environments. They lived as immigrants—Ziyadah in Egypt and Jibran in the United States. Ziyadah, in particular, advocated for equality and social change, working alongside Jibran to establish foundational theories for these movements. Her significant work, *al-Mosawat* (Equality), critiqued socialist discourse for oversimplifying the concept of equality. She examined various terms and authoritarian practices, discussing social classes, aristocracy, slavery, and democracy, while also refuting socialism in its peaceful and revolutionary forms through an exploration of anarchism and its European history. Her feminist trilogy—*A'ishah Taymur*, *Bahithat al-Badiyah*, and *Warda al-Yaziji*—focused on three pioneering women of the Renaissance.

Despite these contributions, *Equality* never received the recognition it deserved, especially in contrast to Jibran's *The Prophet*, which garnered him international fame. Ziyadah's legacy has been overshadowed by her image as a beautiful woman who hosted a famous cultural salon on Tuesdays, where prominent men gathered to converse. Tragically, her intellectual contributions were often eclipsed by the narrative of her "madness," an episode in which her male relatives institutionalized her—allegedly to claim her inheritance. Although Ziyadah remains one of the most researched scholars of her time, discussions around her have largely centered on her personal life rather than her significant intellectual contributions (Haddad 2017).

underscoring the shortcomings of "Orientalism" as seen through the prism of Western norms of morality and Saʿadāwī emphasizing the importance of adopting a matriarchal approach to philosophy and, consistent with her fierce resistance to any claim of exclusive male originality and superiority, viewing matriarchy as a stand-alone paradigm—a paradigm not derived from or defined by maleness. In this connection, Saʿadāwī confirms another abiding reality in the originality of female gods as the center of the universe. By contrast, de Beauvoir concludes that the structure of our being is based on male superiority, even when females were gods, it was a man's invention.

It is essential to examine philosophical approaches from all sides—East and West, patriarchal and matriarchal—and to explore how rationalism and affectivity have influenced issues of sexuality, racism, gender, and other minorities that continue to be marginalized today. To this end, tools and insights afforded by Intersectionality, Essentialism, and Existentialism will be employed.

Examining Edward Said's thought through the same lens can also contribute to a more balanced research perspective, as Said represents the migrant and Eastern experience in the West. Indeed, an examination of philosophical canons through the works of Arab Eastern thinkers may help fill the increasing gap of exclusion. Connecting ideas and thoughts, and promoting ideals rooted in matriarchy rather than patriarchy, within the diverse realities of patriarchal societies, may help foster real change in the political, social, cultural, and economic domains of communities. This approach will be helpful for future investigations into rethinking applied canons.

Moreover, it is a woman's issue and, most likely, a feminist issue as well. It is a long way in women's authoring scientific research through their own eyes of perceiving

change and making a difference. It is all about our own stories as people that create history, make the change, and leave at a standpoint of one's situated knowledge. One's personal story is a landmark, a standpoint in making history. Science, research, and history need to be not only discussed, explored, and examined by women, but also need to be told, produced, and created by women.

By using Standpoint theories and Situated Knowledges, there is, according to Harding, an opportunity to uncover the underlying or hidden layers of dominant sexist and androcentric ideologies that shaped everyone's lives. This perspective bridged that gap between, on the one hand, the realities of women's everyday experiences and, on the other hand, the conceptual frameworks upheld by influential social institutions, including academic disciplines.

Yet such sciences could not occur without political struggles" (Harding 2004, 6). This is so because "the political struggle itself can produce insight. The more value-neutral a conceptual framework appears, the more likely it is to advance the hegemonic interests of dominant groups and the less likely it is to be able to detect important actualities of social relations" (Harding 2004, 6). Harding further asserts: "We need not—indeed, must not—choose between 'good politics' and 'good science,' Standpoint theorists argued, for the former can produce the latter" (Harding 2004, 6).

Thus, Standpoint theory becomes a transitional epistemology nourished through Situated Knowledges. Fernando Selgas argues that

> The journey from the modern feminist Standpoint to postmodern Situated Knowledges epistemology has been very fruitful. It was, for example, useful to act based on a kind of internal realism for a while, as if relativism were an outside (of Feminism) problem. This was like taking a breath. And I hope Standpoint theory's best contribution will stay with us for a long time in the way it uses the

power/knowledge imbalance as a critical and scientific device to improve our 'objectivity.' (Selgas 2004, 305-306)

We have passed through an era of sexual revolution, which addressed only some issues while marginalizing others due to its foundation in a patriarchal structure that restricts and unequally distributes opportunities. We now need to move into a matriarchal era, one that can balance and include all people with their differences. A comprehensive approach is necessary for studying minority issues and developing strategies to foster inclusive societies.

The adoption of the String-figuring paradigm is proposed as an effective method for this purpose. Unlike traditional approaches that prioritize the superiority of certain philosophical orientations, String-figuring emphasizes the examination of various interconnected factors that contribute to the existence of the "threatening other." This holistic perspective is crucial for promoting a sense of togetherness rooted in recognizing the shared humanity of all individuals, surpassing the mere pursuit of equality as the sole guiding principle for societal harmony and inclusion.

In essence, a truly matriarchal approach to philosophy would serve as a nurturing space for knowledge and a transformative arena for the accumulation of insights through the interplay of diverse perspectives, which, in turn, are influenced by individual thinkers' identities and lived experiences.

6. Significance and Expected Outcomes and Impact

In this research project, I set out to explore the adequacy of philosophical canons for informing strategies to address the social injustice that minorities worldwide continue

to face, with a particular focus on the injustice endured by women. Early on, I recognized that relying solely on the idea that the dominance of a patriarchal structure in philosophy—since Socrates—would provide limited insight into why social injustice has persisted for so long.

For many decades, efforts to challenge patriarchy in philosophy and promote a matriarchal structure have not significantly advanced. Even where shifts occurred, social injustice remains. This realization led me to consider that other influences might be at play. Unsure of what exactly to focus on, I began by questioning the alleged bias and inadequacy of philosophical canons. I extended this inquiry to better understand the condition of Palestinian women under a multi-layered patriarchal structure, which includes a patriarchal social order, Israel's colonial occupation, and the Palestinian political system.

As I pursued this line of inquiry, I experienced an important shift. My thesis advisor observed that my writing, both in content and style, was deeply influenced by my identity as a Palestinian woman, who has lived under Israeli occupation all her life. The questions I raised were shaped by contextual considerations that could help fill gaps in our understanding of the status of oppressed minorities in society. By contextualizing scientific inquiry, I could complement the quest for knowledge typically anchored in objectivity or neutrality. This approach would prevent the perpetuation of power asymmetries and social injustice—a key principle in Standpoint and Situated Knowledges theories.

As I grappled more with these issues, I gained considerable insight from studying the contributions of foundational thinkers in these realms, as well as related concepts like

Intersectionality, Borderlands discourse, and String-figuring. The conclusions I drew

from this research, while not paradigm-shifting, enriched my focus on ensuring that the

outcomes of my research would have practical relevance in the quest for social justice for

the marginalized and oppressed.

A significant conclusion from this research is the importance of perspective in

engaging with debates on how to implement justice for all in more diverse but inclusive

societies. This leads to important questions about what shapes individual perspectives—

factors such as motives, identity, and life experience are crucial.

In terms of motives, I argue that the purpose of scientific inquiry should not be

merely to advance knowledge for its own sake. Instead, it should be driven by the

aspiration to improve the human condition. In this project, this is achieved by challenging

the notion of the inevitable existence of the "threatening other" and promoting the

humanness of all individuals, regardless of their race, gender, sexual orientation, or faith.

One's own sense of identity and life experience play key roles in shaping these

motives, imparting a measure of differentness, if not uniqueness, to each contributor's

perspective. This underscores the importance of choosing a research methodology rooted

in Standpoint and Situated Knowledges theories.

Approaching the task of managing diversity in ways that can lead to more

inclusive societies has a better chance of success if the knowledge base is informed by a

wide array of perspectives, rather than strict adherence to traditional philosophical

canons. Context must matter if research outcomes are to align with the values of all

citizens, particularly the marginalized and disadvantaged.

The significance of this research project lies in its application of a methodology capable of producing meaningful outcomes relevant to social justice and the advancement of the human condition. However, this project does not aim to definitively settle the debate on the adequacy of philosophical canons or the relative merits of gendered, orientalist, or Colonial-Modernity approaches in pursuing social justice. Likewise, in no way is this meant to definitively settle the debate on the adequacy of philosophical canons, individually or collectively, or the extent to which a gendered approach, an orientalist approach, a Colonial-Modernity approach, or any combination thereof, for the purposes of pursuing social justice for women and other minorities.

To be sure, it is not my contention that the validity or usefulness of philosophical canons for the purposes of this study is doubtful. It is just that the persistence of social injustice, despite repeated, well-considered attempts at challenging the orthodoxy in the realm of philosophy, was what inspired me to sidestep that debate. Instead, this research probes issues related to the lack of contextualization in research outcomes and the shortcomings of agents of change—such as the feminist movement and the Palestinian leadership—in their quests for women's rights and freedom for the Palestinian people. These factors may have played a significant role in derailing the efforts of these agents.

That is one significant contribution of this research project in terms of its expected outcomes. Other contributions include bringing into sharper focus the ill effects that flow from authoritarianism and the absence of participatory, legitimate, responsive, and responsible leadership of political movements. This conclusion flows from the consideration I gave to the multitude of similarities that situate the plight of the Palestinian people in the broader context of Borderlands people in general.

A third contribution relates to the importance of not making the quest for social justice for women anchored on the need to ensure gender equality but instead on the necessity of viewing women, like all other minorities, as entitled to all their inalienable rights as human beings, no more but certainly no less. In short, women must be seen as fully worthy of enjoying those rights because of their humanness, not because, somehow, they are accepted as having passed an androcentric worthiness test of sorts.

The impact I hope this study will have includes encouraging philosophy students to embrace their identities and life experiences in their academic work, rather than fearing that doing so might undermine the objectivity of their inquiries. In fact, stripping scientific endeavors of perspective risks promoting pseudo-neutrality at the expense of humanity's quest for social justice.

Finally, a point of form, but perhaps also of substance. As is already self-evident, my sense of my own identity has played a defining role in the identification of my research interest and in formulating and shaping the trajectory and content of this research project. While not common practice in academic writing, it felt natural to adopt, at least partially, a memoirist style, with reliance on first-person mode, no less. For one thing, it is the writing style that I have adopted in almost all of my previous literary works, and, for another, I felt that such style would impart authenticity to the perspective I would bring to this project and to the stories I felt needed to be told. With that in mind, I have to say that I felt an enormous sense of validation when I learned that Annie Ernaux had won the 2022 Noble Prize in literature, primarily due to her memoirist personal-history writing style.

7. Overview of the Dissertation Structure

This thesis is divided into three thematic chapters, each designed to explore different dimensions of the research question. The structure of the thesis reflects the interdisciplinary nature of the study, integrating insights from Standpoint theory, Situated Knowledges, and Intersectionality to examine how "otherness" is constructed and perceived across various contexts.

Chapter 1 employs Standpoint theory and Situated Knowledges approach to challenge and deconstruct the rigid structures within traditional philosophical canons, particularly the dichotomy between patriarchy and matriarchy. By approaching philosophy from the perspective of a border lens, this chapter seeks to dissolve these binaries, creating space for more fluid and transformative ways of thinking. This critical examination lays the groundwork for rethinking identity and difference within philosophical contexts, reflecting an interdisciplinary approach that integrates philosophy with gender and cultural studies.

Chapter 2 shifts the focus to the assertion that the dominance of Western cultural influence in philosophical discourse may have rendered the philosophical canon inadequate for understanding and dealing with the marginalization of minorities. In addition to examining the emergence and significance of Arab Eastern philosophy, this chapter explores how Arab Eastern philosophers addressed the concept of the "threatening other" and how, by focusing on "differentness" as the driving force behind the emergence of societal faultlines, their intellectual pursuits could promote a better understanding of the seemingly inevitable emergence of otherness. By highlighting the unique contributions of Arab Eastern thought, the chapter also provides historical context

for contemporary issues and deepens the analysis of identity and otherness across cultural contexts.

Chapter 3 explores the impact of Colonial-Modernity on Palestinian identity and cultural politics, particularly under Israeli occupation. This chapter examines the intersectional impact of the occupation and the patriarchal social organization on Palestinian women and the broader population, analyzing how colonial and modern discourses shape perceptions of identity and resistance. It brings the discussions of "otherness" and identity into a contemporary geopolitical context, synthesizing themes from the previous chapters to offer a comprehensive criticism of Colonial-Modernity and its effects on marginalized groups, particularly Palestinian women.

The thesis will conclude with synthesis of the key elements of an effective resistance strategy against subjugation and the marginalization of minorities. This includes empowering the oppressed to assert their humanness, addressing the failures of agents of change, and advocating for a fundamental reorientation of governmental strategies to end discrimination and exclusion.

As a transition into the detailed analysis within these chapters, the groundwork established in the preceding sections serves as a crucial reference point, ensuring that the reader remains grounded in the thesis's overarching goals and methodologies. This approach allows for a thorough and integrated understanding of the issues at hand, preparing the reader to engage deeply with the subsequent analysis.

Chapter 1: Building the Philosophical Canon Anew

Originally, there was but one sex, so the Greeks relate, and that was man's. Splendidly endowed he was…the gods grew jealous. Worse, they feared he would not willingly bow under their yoke…. Unable to subdue him by force, they sought a power weaker… yet stronger—one strong enough to compel him…That power was woman, the marvel of creation, even in the eyes of the gods a greater marvel than man—a discovery which the gods in their naïveté could not help but applaud themselves for. What more can be said in her praise than that she was able to accomplish what even the gods did not believe themselves able to do; and what more can be said in her praise than that she did accomplish it! But how marvelous a creation must be hers to have accomplished it.

—Søren Kierkegaard, *In Vino Veritas*

1.1 Philosophical Canons Reexamined: An Overview

The adequacy of the European philosophical canon in addressing the persistent failure of inclusion efforts has been increasingly questioned. Critics argue that the dominance of patriarchal structures in philosophy, entrenched since the time of Socrates, poses a significant barrier to inclusivity. Furthermore, Western rationality, which has long dominated philosophical discourse, is often cited as a contributing factor to these ongoing failures.[9]

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[9] For discussions on critiques of the European philosophical canon from feminist and postcolonial perspectives, see bell hooks, *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center* (Boston: South End Press, 1984). hooks critiques the exclusion of marginalized voices from feminist theory, emphasizing the need for Feminism to become a mass-based political movement to be transformative. She argues: "That revolutionary ideology can be created only if the experiences of people on the margin who suffer sexist oppression and other forms of group oppression are understood, addressed, and incorporated" (hooks 1984, 163). See also Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978), where Said argues: "Orientalism is premised upon exteriority, that is, on the fact that the Orientalist, poet or scholar, makes the Orient speak, describes the Orient, renders its mysteries plain for and to the West" (Said 1978, 20).

To address these concerns, this chapter advocates for a re-examination of the philosophical canon, moving beyond the simplistic binary of patriarchy versus matriarchy. Instead, it proposes a more nuanced approach that incorporates diverse perspectives, including those shaped by marginalized identities. This approach aims to highlight the complexities of power dynamics in philosophy and the potential for more inclusive and contextually aware discourse.[10]

In my exploration, I focused on the experiences of women and refugees, considering whether philosophies rooted in matriarchy and Eastern rationality could offer new insights. However, I approached this investigation with a healthy dose of skepticism. While these alternative paradigms oppose traditional Western philosophy, there is a concern that they might merely invert the existing hierarchy without genuinely expanding the philosophical discourse. For example, the risk lies in replacing one form of exclusion with another, rather than fostering a truly inclusive framework that can address the specific plights of women, migrants, and other marginalized groups.

As explained in section 1.3 below, it is not a given that such constructions exist, or even can exist, in the sense of those alternative paradigms being completely antithetical to those that are dominant in philosophical discourse. This is so if only because the gender- or geography-based identity of the shapers of those dominant approaches is most unlikely to manifest itself to the same extent, or to influence thought processes uniformly. Thus, a satisfactory solution to the perceived imbalance of

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[10] For works discussing the limitations of binary thinking in gender and philosophy, see Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (1990), where Butler argues: "gender is a complexity whose totality is permanently deferred, never fully what it is at any given juncture in time" (Butler 1999, 22), and Luce Irigaray, *This Sex Which Is Not One* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1985), where Irigaray critiques patriarchal discourse, stating: "Outside of this volume already circumscribed by the signification articulated in (the father's) discourse nothing is: a woman. Zone of silence" (Irigaray 1985, 113).

philosophical canons cannot be anchored on trying to identify constructions that are merely the obverse of paradigms that, themselves, are fluid or loosely defined. In my view, past attempts at doing so have hindered genuine efforts to better understand the power dynamics that underlie such a binary view of gender and power relations.

An appreciation of this shortcoming would help bring into focus the need to explore the limited ways in which philosophical traditions have been influenced by the experiences and perspectives of people who have been traditionally marginalized. And that was precisely what led me to consider the need to examine contextual considerations that are relevant to understanding of the status of oppressed minorities, beginning with a particular focus on the status of women in this chapter.[11]

In section 1.2, I explore the contributions of philosophers who raised questions about the shortcomings of the dominance of patriarchal order and Western rationality in philosophy. Additionally, I analyze the two-way interaction between Feminist Theory and the broader discourse about the dominance of patriarchy in philosophy. This will set the stage for an examination in section 1.2.2 of contextual considerations that can help fill gaps in our understanding of the status of women. In section 1.2.3 I undertake a comparative assessment of the philosophical discourse on viewing women as the "other" and in section 1.3, I delve into the relevant contributions of Standpoint and Situated Knowledges theorists. I also look for insights that may be gained from other related conceptualizations and constructions, like Borderlands, String-figuring, and

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[11] Factors bearing specifically on the plight of refugees will be examined in the chapter devoted to the existence of Arab Eastern philosophy.

Intersectionality. Annex A to this chapter provides a historical overview of matriarchal social orders of ancient times.

1.2 On Patriarchy and Matriarchy in Philosophical Discourse

Among the key themes that come to mind when exploring different approaches to addressing the exclusion of women—along with other marginalized groups—from philosophy is the role of power and privilege in shaping philosophical inquiry. This recognition drives the search for relevance in Feminist intersectional theory within philosophical discourse, aiming to expand the boundaries of inquiry and promote a more diverse and inclusive discipline capable of addressing the complex issues facing our world today.

In considering the adoption of a matriarchal approach to counteract the persistent marginalization of women, there is a valid concern that this effort might simply seek to replace the patriarchal paradigm with an equally limiting, antithetical framework.[12]

However, this concern should not get in the way of exploring the experience with attempts to develop a matriarchal philosophical paradigm. Rather, it should encourage us to do so, but not with a view to opposing or necessarily subsuming the patriarchal paradigm. Instead, the objective would be to recreate relationships within frameworks of checks and balances on the exercise of power and to distribute roles in an inclusive rather than exclusionary manner. In this way, the focus would be on the need to reconstruct the

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[12] Elizabeth Spelman critiques the assumption that feminist accounts of "women's" lives can universally apply to all women, arguing that "we should be skeptical about any claim that theories constructed by and for one group of women will automatically enlighten (rather than deeply mislead) us about all women's lives." See Elizabeth V. Spelman, *Inessential Woman: Problems of Exclusion in Feminist Thought* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1988), 9.

system with the aim of making matriarchy an active incubator for a creation that fosters a just and humane human condition.

Many scholars have made significant efforts to challenge patriarchal structures across various fields, employing a wide array of theoretical tools. Among these, two philosophers, Mary Wollstonecraft and Nawāl Saʿadāwī, stand out for their courageous challenges to entrenched patriarchal hierarchies in their respective societies. Their contributions focus on two interrelated issues.

The first issue pertains to the widely accepted belief that the dominance of a patriarchal order in philosophy has hindered the discipline's ability to effectively address the injustices faced by women and other minorities. The second issue relates to the assumption that this patriarchal dominance must be countered by an alternative philosophical approach rooted in matriarchy.

These two issues resonate with a broad consensus among feminist scholars such as Simone de Beauvoir, Gloria Anzaldúa, Sandra Harding, Luce Irigaray, Judith Butler, Hélène Cixous, Kimberlé Crenshaw, and Donna Haraway. These scholars extensively explore topics such as race, gender, religion, and coloniality, all while challenging traditional patriarchal assumptions in philosophy. They advocate for more inclusive and diverse approaches, incorporating a wide array of perspectives through frameworks like Situated Knowledges, String-figuring, and Intersectionality.

Definitions matter. Rather than positioning a matriarchal approach as a simple antithesis to patriarchy, I propose viewing it as an incubator of knowledge that emerges from the interplay of diverse perspectives, each shaped by the individual thinker's identity and lived experiences. In such a worldview, matriarchy in philosophy should not be

considered through the prism of a gender warfare that reflexively holds that, by virtue of its inadequacies, philosophy's hierarchical patriarchy inevitably imparts wholesomeness to the matriarchal approach, simply because these two paradigms are perceived to be opposite of one another.[13]

1.2.1 Key Contributions on the Dominance of Patriarchy in Philosophy

The growing interest in feminist and intersectional approaches to philosophy reflects a desire to challenge traditional philosophical assumptions and power structures that have excluded and marginalized women and other minorities. While these approaches are not exclusively rooted in matriarchy, they seek to account for those experiences and perspectives in philosophical inquiry and knowledge production. Before getting into that, it may be instructive to examine how key thinkers and philosophers have shaped the discourse on patriarchal dominance in philosophy, as well as the potential limitations and contributions of matriarchal perspectives.

In *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792), Mary Wollstonecraft critically engages with Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Émile* or *On Education*, challenging his rationalist framework. Wollstonecraft laid the groundwork for feminist thinkers by directly confronting the patriarchal assumptions embedded in philosophical inquiry.[14]

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[13] For an exploration of how knowledge is shaped by identity and experience, rather than by binary oppositions, see Donna Haraway, "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective," *Feminist Studies* 14, no. 3 (1988): 575–599. Haraway argues that knowledge is always "situated" and that recognizing this situatedness allows for a more nuanced understanding of how knowledge is constructed and validated within specific social and cultural contexts.

[14] For earlier feminist contributions predating Wollstonecraft, see Christine de Pizan, *The Book of the City of Ladies* (1405), which defends women's capabilities and contributions to society. For further insights on Christine de Pizan's influence, see Sarah Gristwood, *Game of Queens: The Women Who Made Sixteenth-Century Europe* (London: Oneworld Publications, 2016). This contrasts with Niccolò Machiavelli's pragmatic and often ruthless portrayal of power in *The Prince* (1532).

Wollstonecraft's approach to philosophy is grounded in reason and rationality, with a primary focus on a significant misfortune that befell women: the lack of access to education and opportunities for intellectual development. This deprivation, she argues, has severely impeded women's ability to participate fully in society and exercise their rights as citizens. Wollstonecraft asserts that the "neglected education of my fellow-creatures is the grand source of the misery I deplore," highlighting that women are "rendered weak and wretched by a variety of concurring causes," chiefly due to a "false system of education" that prioritizes making women "alluring mistresses" over nurturing their capacities to be "rational mothers" and respected members of society (Wollstonecraft, 2006, 17). This concern is encapsulated in her call to "strengthen the female mind by enlarging it," as she believes this will ultimately bring "an end to blind obedience" (Wollstonecraft, 2006, 17).

Wollstonecraft's *Vindication* can be seen as a direct response to Rousseau's *Émile* (1762), particularly in how she is critical of his creation of the character Sophy. Wollstonecraft's most significant philosophical foil was undoubtedly Rousseau, though she began her writing career after his death (Bergès, Botting, and Coffee 2020, 4).

While Wollstonecraft admired Rousseau's talent, she was profoundly disappointed by his views on women, particularly his portrayal of Sophy. She described his character of Sophy as "captivating" but "grossly unnatural," criticizing the foundations of her education as being built on principles that aroused her "indignation" rather than admiration (Wollstonecraft 2006, 17-18). Rousseau dedicated much *of Émile* to tracing

Émile's development from birth to manhood, yet when addressing women, he continued

to view them as inferior. Sophy is introduced late in the text, designed primarily as a

companion to Émile, her virtues overshadowed by her role as a sexual object. Her

modesty is portrayed as a tool to arouse Émile, and her education is deemed superfluous.

This treatment reflects Rousseau's broader perspective on women's roles, which

Wollstonecraft vehemently rejected—a criticism further explored in modern scholarship,

such as Christopher Brooke's analysis of Rousseau's educational paradoxes.[15]

       Wollstonecraft's reservations about Rousseau are understandable. While he offers

a deep exploration of education for men, he ultimately views women through a lens of

subordination. Sophy is presented as existing primarily to support Émile, embodying

traditional gender roles that Wollstonecraft found deeply unjust. Her anger is palpable as

she criticizes the notion of male superiority, a concept she saw Rousseau perpetuating

through the character of Sophy.

       While Wollstonecraft's criticism of Rousseau is filled with admiration for his

talent, it is also charged with a sense of anger at the injustice women faced, both in her

time and throughout history. She rejects the notion of women's inherent inferiority, which

she perceives in the supporting role that Rousseau assigns to Sophy in *Émile*.

Wollstonecraft engages in a critical dialogue with Rousseau, challenging what she

interprets as his assertion of male superiority.

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[15] Christopher Brooke highlights the paradoxes in Rousseau's educational philosophy, particularly the tension between fostering autonomy and employing manipulative strategies, contrasting this with Wollstonecraft's call for rational education for women. See Christopher Brooke, "Jean-Jacques Rousseau," in *The Wollstonecraftian Mind*, ed. Sandrine Bergès, Eileen Hunt Botting, and Alan Coffee (Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2020), 161-71.

However, this interpretation might oversimplify Rousseau's stance. For example, in the chapter on Sophy, Rousseau asserts that "Sophy should be as truly a woman as Émile is a man, i.e., she must possess all those characters of her sex which are required to enable her to play her part in the physical and moral order" (Rousseau 2015, 306). This statement suggests that Rousseau viewed men and women as different, rather than directly one as inherently superior to the other. His emphasis on the shared humanity and physical similarities between the sexes challenges societal norms that perpetuate gender inequalities.

Rousseau writes:

But for her sex, a woman is a man; she has the same organs, the same needs, the same faculties. The machine is the same in its construction; its parts, its working, and its appearance are similar... Yet where sex is concerned man and woman are unlike; each is the complement of the other... It is perhaps one of the greatest marvels how nature has contrived to make two beings so like and yet so different. (Rousseau 2015, 306-307)

This complex view acknowledges both the similarities and differences between men and women, revealing a nuanced perspective that resonates with ongoing discussions about gender equality. The fact remains, however, that, by assigning Sophy a support-cast role, Rousseau effectively rendered her not on par with *Émile*.

Wollstonecraft recognized the complexities in categorically asserting that Rousseau viewed women as inferior, which likely contributed to her conflicted assessment of *Émile*. Nevertheless, she unequivocally rejected the notion of male superiority, which she attributed to a "false system of education" designed by men. This system, she argues, aimed to make women "alluring mistresses" rather than rational beings deserving of respect. Wollstonecraft's frustration is evident in her criticism of how

education confined women to subordinate roles, limiting their intellectual and social

potential (Wollstonecraft 2006, 1-2).

Her disdain for what she perceived as Rousseau's bias led her to compare his

views to Islamic teachings on women's status, although this comparison reads more as a

passionate criticism than a reasoned analysis. Specifically, there is nothing in her

indictment of Islamic teachings on the status of women that is not prevalent under all

other man-dominated social orders.[16] She claims that "In the true style of Mahometanism,

women are treated as subordinate beings, not as part of the human species, when

improvable reason is allowed to be the dignified distinction that raises men above the

brute creation" (Wollstonecraft 2006, 2).[17]

Wollstonecraft's story also underscores the broader issue of historical bias. She

suffered from character assassination, fueled by her husband's posthumous publication of

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[16] For biblical references on women's roles that Wollstonecraft implicitly challenges, see Exodus 20:17, Numbers 30:3-16, Ephesians 5:22-24, 1 Corinthians 11:3, and 1 Timothy 2:11-15. For a discussion on Wollstonecraft's rhetoric and its implications, see Madeline Cronin (2020), who explores Joyce Zonana's concept of "feminist Orientalism" (Zonana 1993), and for Islamic perspectives on gender equality, see Fatima Mernissi, *The Veil and the Male Elite* (New York: Perseus, 1991), preface.

[17] Wollstonecraft writes: "In a treatise, therefore, on female rights and manners, the works which have been particularly written for their improvement must not be overlooked, especially when it is asserted, in direct terms, that the minds of women are enfeebled by false refinement, that the books of instruction, written by men of genius, have had the same tendency as more frivolous productions, and that, in the true style of Mahometanism, women are treated as kinds of subordinate beings, and not as a part of the human species, when improvable reason is allowed to be the dignified distinction that raises men above the brute creation, and puts a natural scepter in feeble hands" (*A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* 2006, 2).

A similar reflection on women's subordination in the "Orient" can be found in Søren Kierkegaard's *In Vino Veritas*. *Stages on Life's Way* (1845). Through the character Victor Eremita, Kierkegaard sarcastically reflects that women in the East, though enslaved, at least have a clear and defined role, in contrast to the fluctuating status of women in the West. Kierkegaard's irony here suggests that Eastern subjugation, while extreme, offers more certainty than the confusing mix of idealization and trivialization that Western women experience under the system of gallantry. As Eremita remarks, "If I were a woman I would prefer to be sold by my father to the highest bidder, as is the custom in the Orient; for there is at least some sense in such a deal." (Kierkegaard 2019) Kierkegaard contrasts the clearly defined subjugation of Eastern women with the illusory freedom of Western women, who are often caught between being idealized or trivialized by men's gallantry.(Kierkegaard 2019)

what he claimed were her scandalous memoirs. While she eventually became a highly regarded thinker and a foundational figure in Feminism, her philosophical contributions were long overshadowed by unfounded questions about her morality. In contrast, Rousseau, a contemporary of hers who openly wrote about his own moral failings in works like *The Reveries of a Solitary Walker* (1782) and *The Confessions* (1782-1789), faced no such enduring prejudice.

Despite the challenges Wollstonecraft faced as a woman philosopher—challenges her male contemporaries, like Rousseau, did not have to worry about—the power of her ideas endured alongside theirs. Her effective advocacy for women's rights was crucial in paving the way for later feminist philosophers to challenge patriarchal assumptions. Her critique of an education system dominated by male perspectives likely influenced subsequent assertions that the patriarchal dominance in philosophical discourse rendered traditional canons inadequate for addressing, much less remedying, the social injustices suffered by women.

Evidence of Wollstonecraft's influence on the evolution of philosophical discourse on women's status is apparent in the work of Nawāl Saʿadāwī, who asserts that women's selfhood not only exists independently but also originates from and resides within a matriarchal context. Her refrain, "I am the daughter of Nut," underscores her assertion of female identity as autonomous from a male-dominated world. Saʿadāwī contends that these ancient matriarchal contexts reveal how changes in social and economic structures have historically influenced women's roles, ultimately leading to their subordination under patriarchal systems.

Similarly, in *The Second Sex* (1953), Simone de Beauvoir is critical of how men have historically shaped women's roles to serve their own needs, noting that "Eve was not created for her own sake but as a companion for Adam, and she was made from his rib" (De Beauvoir 1953, 149). However, Sa'adāwī argues that de Beauvoir never fully escaped this patriarchal narrative, which continues to confine women's identities within male-defined parameters. In doing so, Sa'adāwī challenges conventional Western perspectives on female identity, most notably rejecting the patriarchal notion of women being created from a man's rib—a concept she believed de Beauvoir never fully transcended.[18]

By reclaiming a connection to ancient Egypt and its matriarchal legacy, Sa'adāwī positioned herself within a framework that extends beyond Eurocentric ideologies,[19] inviting a re-evaluation of women's roles and status in society based on diverse cultural foundations. She highlights this by asserting that "Islam is considered one of the most tolerant and least rigid of religions, rational in many of its aspects, adaptable and leaving scope for change" (Sa'adāwī 1980, 196).

Sa'adāwī also explicitly criticized Simone de Beauvoir's reasoning regarding the marginalization of women, contending that de Beauvoir's analysis is deeply influenced by European medieval Christian thought, which she believes is not universally

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[18] For further discussions on Sa'adāwī's critique of patriarchal narratives and her emphasis on matriarchal contexts, see Nawāl Sa'adāwī, *The Hidden Face of Eve: Women in the Arab World* (London: Zed Books, 1980), 91. For de Beauvoir's analysis of women's roles in historical and religious contexts, see Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (New York: Knopf, 1953), 149, 292.

[19] Sa'adāwī critiques the Western tendency to overlook the richness of non-European histories, stating: "Many are the scholars, writers, and researchers who have made comparisons between the West and the Arab World, only drawing examples from a period in our history, now more than a thousand years old... How much more true and scientific would a comparative study have been of the lifestyles of Arab and European men from the same period" (*The Hidden Face of Eve*, 133).

applicable. Instead, Sa'adāwī offers ancient Egypt's reverence for female deities as an alternative foundation for understanding gender and women's roles. In contrast, de Beauvoir's focus on the impact of Christianity and Roman law presents a narrower view, rooted in European history.[20] By challenging these Eurocentric perspectives, Sa'adāwī calls for a more inclusive feminist theory that acknowledges the diverse historical and cultural contexts of non-European civilizations.[21]

Sa'adāwī posits that the political hierarchy of ancient Egypt provided a model for a more egalitarian society, one that challenges patriarchal domination. She argues that ancient Egyptian goddesses, far from being mere idols, represented powerful and autonomous women who served as both religious and political leaders. These goddesses, like the ruling queens of their time, can inspire contemporary women to reclaim their agency and challenge patriarchal norms. For Sa'adāwī, Isis, in particular, symbolizes female power and knowledge. In her words, "The woman god Isis was, however, the greatest of gods because she possessed more understanding and knowledge than all other gods" (Sa'adāwī 1980, 104).

Sa'adāwī also encapsulates a deep understanding of the complex nature of women's oppression in Arab societies. She argues that this subjugation stems from the

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[20] For a detailed comparison between Sa'adāwī and de Beauvoir's views on women's roles, see Sa'adāwī, *The Hidden Face of Eve* (1980), and de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (1953), Chapter IV: "Through the Middle Ages to Eighteenth Century France."

[21] When I discussed this matter with Sa'adāwī, my reference to the French philosopher triggered something with Sa'adāwī, as after what felt like an eternal pause, she retorted: "de Beauvoir never exited from the idea that she is an outcome of a man's rib. The thought of the medieval church in Europe has been engraved in Europeans for centuries. Her horizons were in their utmost Sartre's. But I am the daughter of Nut. The source of creation came through me. We are the outcome of Ancient Egypt. The civilization that nourished female gods into the universe. Personal interview with Nawāl Sa'adāwī in 2016, Cairo.

pervasive influence of patriarchal systems, not solely from Eastern or Islamic cultures. Saʿadāwī asserts that the path to women's liberation lies in collective action and political organization. She states:

> We the women in Arab countries realize that we are still slaves, not because we belong to the East or Islamic societies, but due to the patriarchal class system that has dominated the world for thousands of years. To become free, we must unite as a politically organized force (Saʿadāwī 1980, xv).

Saʿadāwī, with her pioneering feminist perspective, made significant contributions to Arab feminist activism. She emphasizes the importance of challenging patriarchal structures and promoting women's empowerment. According to her, the central struggle for women in Arab Islamic countries is not a conflict between 'free thought' and 'belief in religion' or 'feminist rights' versus 'male chauvinism,' but something deeper than the superficial aspects of modernization found in the developed world (Saʿadāwī 1980, ix).

Saʿadāwī further argues that traditional gender roles and practices, like female genital mutilation and honor killings, were used to maintain patriarchal control over women's bodies and sexuality. She asserts that the struggle is not just about women's rights but also about reclaiming Arab economic, scientific, and cultural heritage from foreign capitalist interests. Saʿadāwī is critical of how Western-driven modernization, aligned with patriarchal structures, exacerbates inequalities in Arab societies, particularly Egypt. She highlights that the regime's alignment with Western interests deepens the marginalization of women, especially those already oppressed. Moreover, Saʿadāwī argues that celebrated gains for elite women often mask deeper power imbalances rather than challenge them. Her analysis underscores how patriarchy, Capitalism, and

Imperialism intersect to maintain the status quo, and thus she advocates for a comprehensive approach to social change that addresses structural injustices (Saʿadāwī 1980, x).

From the start, Saʿadāwī was critical of the role religions played in shaping laws that undermine women's rights. She contends that all monotheistic religions—Islam, Christianity, and Judaism—have historically justified oppressive practices against women, reinforcing patriarchal structures. She argues that "Religious teachings and campaigns have played, and continue to play, a key role in maintaining and reinforcing reactionary regimes" (Saʿadāwī 1980, vi). She believed it was crucial to reinterpret religious texts in ways that align with feminist values.

Saʿadāwī views the traditional patriarchal structure of society as the root cause of women's oppression and marginalization. She advocates for a new societal structure based on the values of ancient matriarchal societies, where women held power and influence. As she notes,

> It is a well-known fact of human history that the elevated status of woman in society, and in religion, was related to the fact that children carried her name. Under the matriarchal system women occupied a high social position and even ascended the throne of the gods. The monopoly established by male gods was related to the patriarchal system, and the naming of children after the father instead of the mother. (Saʿadāwī 1980, 92).

For Saʿadāwī, this matriarchal structure is intrinsically linked to the concept of motherhood—not merely the act of giving birth, but an all-encompassing dimension of female identity that patriarchal norms have eroded. She argues that a return to matriarchal values is essential to restore the significance of motherhood and the role of women in society.

Saʿadāwī further asserts that these matriarchal values are beneficial not just for women but for all members of society. In her view, patriarchal values have fostered a society of conflict and competition, whereas a matriarchal structure would prioritize cooperation, collaboration, and empathy, benefiting everyone regardless of gender (Emenyonu and Eke 2010).

Throughout her life, Saʿadāwī championed the cause of women's empowerment, emphasizing the importance of incorporating diverse perspectives into philosophical inquiry. She highlighted how language and discourse shape our understanding of gender and power, arguing that Feminist theory and activism are vital in challenging and transforming patriarchal thought. Saʿadāwī believed that her personal story was intertwined with the story of all women, symbolizing the collective resilience and resistance of women against oppression. She asserts that "the oppression of women, the exploitation, and social pressures to which they are exposed, are not characteristic of Arab or Middle Eastern societies, or countries of the "Third World" alone," but are "part of the political, economic, and cultural system, preponderant in most of the world" (Saʿadāwī 1980, preface). Thus, she argues that the struggle for women's emancipation is inherently linked to broader social and political struggles against class and national exploitation, and that only radical change can end these interconnected forms of oppression.

1.2.2 Contributions of Feminist Philosophers

Having explored the approaches of Wollstonecraft and Saʿadāwī, it may be useful to consider the contributions of other influential thinkers such as Fatima Mernissi, Mary

Daly, Luce Irigaray, Donna Haraway, Simone de Beauvoir, Hélène Cixous, and Judith Butler. Needless to say, the great many contributions of these women philosophers were foundational in the promulgation of the Feminist theory and in the articulation of key tenets of Feminism's advocacy for women's rights.

Fatima Mernissi, for instance, criticized the patriarchal dominance perpetuated by the interpretation of Islamic law, which she argues has led to further oppression of women. In *The Veil and the Male Elite* (1991), Mernissi calls for a reevaluation of traditional Islamic interpretations to recognize women's agency within Muslim societies. She warns against the dangers of accepting political axioms as religious truths without scrutiny. She asserts that, "I can only advise redoubled vigilance when, taking the sacred as an argument, someone hurls at the believer as basic truth a political axiom so terrible and with such grave historical consequences..." (Mernissi 1991, 61).

Mernissi explores how women historically wielded power in Muslim societies, particularly through their roles as wives and mothers. She argues that women had significant influence over societal development through their familial roles, a power that should be both recognized and harnessed.

In her book *The Forgotten Queens of Islam* (1993), Mernissi highlights women of prominence in positions of power and religious authority (See Annex B). However, she asserts that, historically, most Muslim women had little access to political power and were largely relegated to the private sphere of the home. Mernissi notes that early Islamic society in Medina provided unprecedented opportunities for women, where they gained

full citizenship and participated in political and military affairs alongside men (Mernissi 1991, viii).[22]

For her part, Mary Daly—a philosopher, theologian, and feminist scholar—focused on how the body has been used to control women throughout history. She argues that patriarchal power structures have historically been reinforced by controlling women's bodies, including their reproductive capacities. Daly points out that women's bodies have been controlled through practices such as female genital mutilation, forced sterilization, and laws regulating women's reproductive choices. She also rejects the concept of tokenism,[23] wherein patriarchal systems offer superficial reforms—such as the legalization of abortion—that appear to benefit women but ultimately serve to maintain the status quo. Daly asserts that these token victories create the illusion of progress, while the broader oppressive structures remain intact. She calls for the reclamation of women's bodies as a site of power and resistance through self-transcendence, which she saw in terms of struggle and as a process of coming to stand apart from men and from the patriarchal modes of oppression. As she observes,

> This is a demonically double-sided trap, for of course reforms, such as legalization of abortion, aid many women in desperate situations. However, because the "changes" that are achieved are victories in a vacuum, that is, in a totally oppressive social context, they do not essentially free the Female Self but instead function to hide both the fact of continuing oppression and the possibilities for better options and for more radical freedom.(Daly 1990)

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[22] Mernissi explores the reigns of Islamic queens and their contributions to political power in *The Forgotten Queens of Islam*(Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993). For further details on these queens, see Annex B of this chapter.

[23] Mary Daly critiques tokenism, which she describes as superficial reforms that give the illusion of progress but ultimately maintain patriarchal power. Daly argues that token victories trap women within oppressive structures, describing tokenism as "a demonically double-sided trap... creating illusions of partial success while making Success appear to be a far distant, extremely difficult-to-obtain 'elusive objective'" (*Gyn/Ecology: The Metaethics of Radical Feminism* (1990), 375).

In some ways, Daly's focus on the need for women to claim control over their bodies as a means of empowering themselves represented an attempt to identify specific themes and elements that might go into the making of a matriarchal approach to philosophy. Another such attempt is exemplified by an important contribution by Luce Irigaray.

In her theory of Sexual Difference, Luce Irigaray seeks to create a more inclusive understanding of subjectivity.[24] She argues that traditional philosophical discourse has been shaped by a patriarchal understanding of language and subjectivity that excluded women's experiences and perspectives. Similarly, Irigaray emphasizes the importance of recognizing and valuing differences, including those of gender, sexuality, and cultural nature. She argues that traditional philosophical discourse has tended to erase or homogenize differences, treating human subjects as if they were all the same. This erasure of difference, according to Irigaray, was one manifestation of how patriarchal power relations were maintained and reproduced. Thus, in her view, the problem lies in the predominance of masculinity for understanding social and symbolic life, noting that

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[24] Luce Irigaray critiques Western culture's male-centric subjectivity in *Speculum of the Other Woman* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1985). She writes: "The enigma that is woman will therefore constitute the target, the object, the stake, of a masculine discourse" (Irigaray 1985a, 13).

Luce Irigaray posits that achieving true subjectivity necessitates an equal capacity for both men and women, challenging traditional philosophical and psychoanalytic discourses that have historically marginalized women. She critiques these discourses for constructing subjectivity around a male norm, relegating women to the position of "the other" and excluding them from epistemological and ontological considerations. In *Speculum of the Other Woman*, Irigaray argues that philosophy has systematically articulated truths from a male perspective, reinforcing male-centric subjectivity. She engages critically with figures like Aristotle, Descartes, and Freud, showing how their theories perpetuate the exclusion of women from true subjectivity. Irigaray advocates for a reconfiguration of subjectivity that allows women to shape their own self-definitions rather than being constrained by patriarchal norms (Luce Irigaray, *Speculum of the Other Woman*[Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1985], 151, 166-167, 180, 315; Sarah K. Donovan, "Luce Irigaray," *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, accessed December 3, 2024, https://iep.utm.edu/irigaray/).

"it is not a matter of toppling that order as they replace it, but of disrupting and modifying it" (Irigaray 1985b). Irigaray's 'matri'[25] seeks to promote a 'culture of difference' (Irigaray 1993b), where she conjures an 'other woman' (Irigaray 1974,1985a) who is not a reincarnation of the patriarchal femininity in 'Freudian theory' (Irigaray 1985a).[26] She tries to exit from the existence of one subject, the masculine, in a patriarchal order.

> Thus, for one instant, brother and sister would recognize each other in their single self, each able to affirm a right that is achieved through the power each has when balanced in/by the other: the power of red blood and of its reabsorption, its sublation into a process of denominating— i.e., of semblance. An ideal distribution would hypothetically occur in which the (ethical) substance of matriarchy and of patriarchy would coexist, contributing their own subsistence to each other, in a peace without alloy, a relationship without desire. The war of the sexes would not take place here. (Irigaray 1985a, 216-217)

Similarly, in *A Cyborg Manifesto* (1985*)*, Donna Haraway emphasizes the importance of embodiment in the cyborg figure, suggesting that the cyborg represents a new kind of embodiment that breaks free from traditional gender and identity categories. Haraway argues that the cyborg embodies a "poethics" that embraces the materiality of the body and the complexity of human experience. She notes that "bodies are maps of

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[25] Irigaray redefines "matriarchal" not as an opposition to "patriarchal," but as a concept rooted in "matter" (*mater*) and "arché" (principle or origin). This redefinition suggests a shift from a system of gendered power relations to a material understanding of origin and order. By linking "matriarchal" to the principle of matter, Irigaray emphasizes a foundational aspect of existence that shapes societal structures and orders, offering a perspective that transcends binary oppositions (Luce Irigaray, *This Sex Which Is Not One* [Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1985], 113; Sarah K. Donovan, "Luce Irigaray," *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, accessed December 3, 2024, https://iep.utm.edu/irigaray/).

[26] Irigaray critiques the historical marginalization of women in philosophical and psychoanalytic discourse, particularly how femininity has been treated as a riddle or enigma that is discussed among men, without women's participation. She writes, "Throughout history people have knocked their heads against the riddle of the nature of femininity... It would be a case of you men speaking among yourselves about woman, who cannot be involved in hearing or producing a discourse that concerns the riddle, the logogriph she represents for you. The enigma that is woman will therefore constitute the target, the object, the stake, of a masculine discourse" (Luce Irigaray, *Speculum of the Other Woman*. 1985, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.13). Here, Irigaray critiques Freud's portrayal of femininity as something to be deciphered by men, highlighting the exclusion of women from these critical discourses.

power and identity," and that "a cyborg body is not innocent; it was not born in a garden; it does not seek unitary identity" (Haraway 1985, 42). Instead, the cyborg challenges fixed boundaries and offers a more fluid and dynamic understanding of identity, disrupting the notion that gender must define global identity.

While Haraway's work is often seen as a departure from Irigaray's ideas, there are notable connections between their thinking. For example, Rebecca Hill affirms that Irigaray's concept of the 'interval between' "emphasizes the importance of embodiment as a way of connecting with the world and with others. Irigaray's formulation of the interval is a thinking of difference that is not reducible to a theory of subjectivity" (Hill 2012).

Irigaray writes, "The transition to a new age requires a change in our perception and conception of space-time, the inhabiting of places, and of containers, or envelopes of identity" (*Irigaray* 1993a, 7). This perspective underscores the necessity of rethinking the structures and boundaries that define identity and existence, advocating for a more fluid and dynamic understanding of these concepts. Furthermore, she states, "What is perceived would be not so much the color and the thing but the difference between things and colors" (Irigaray 1993a,158), highlighting the importance of recognizing and valuing the differences and intervals that exist between entities. It is true, of course, that Irigaray's work elaborates an intersubjective figuration of difference, especially in works published after the early eighties. She takes up the interval as the threshold for a non-hierarchical ethics of relations between woman and man, emphasizing that "things must be good, beautiful, and desirable for all the senses and meaning"(Irigaray 1993a).[27]

Haraway's cyborg figure similarly challenges traditional categories and emphasizes the importance of embodiment in human experience, suggesting that the cyborg is a new kind of embodied subjectivity that can resist dominant cultural norms.

Inarguably, Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* (1953) remains a foundational text of feminist philosophy. It argues that women have been historically relegated to a position of otherness in society, defined in relation to men, and subject to their power. She describes how "when man makes of woman the Other, he may, then, expect her to manifest deep-seated tendencies towards complicity" and notes that women often "fail to lay claim to the status of subject" due to societal pressures and their perceived connection to men (De Beauvoir 1953, 20). De Beauvoir sees this as an unjust and oppressive situation that needs to be challenged through a feminist revolution, which would liberate women from patriarchal norms.

De Beauvoir's idea of woman as the "other" was later picked up by Daly, who, in *Gyn/Ecology: The Metaethics of Radical Feminism* (1978), developed her own concept of how women have been oppressed. While both de Beauvoir and Daly defined biology's role in power distribution, each differed in her view of the role of biology in defining gender. De Beauvoir argues that gender is a social construct imposed on individuals by society. As she puts it, "no desire for revolution dwells within her, nor any thought of her own disappearance as a sex—all she asks is that certain sequels of sexual differentiation

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[27] Rebecca Hill discusses Irigaray's concept of the interval, explaining that for Irigaray, the interval represents the attractions, tensions, and acts between form and matter, as well as the remainder that subsists between what is identified and what remains to be identified. This conception is crucial to Irigaray's philosophy as it challenges fixed definitions and encourages a continuous re-evaluation of the spaces between identities and forms (Rebecca Hill, *The Interval: Relation and Becoming in Irigaray, Aristotle, and Bergson* [New York: Fordham University Press, 2012], 2). See also Stephen Toy, "The Poetics of Sexual Difference: Luce Irigaray and Hélène Cixous," *Women's Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 41, no. 2 (2012): 182–200.

be abolished" (De Beauvoir 1953, 83). In contrast, Daly sees gender as a biological reality that has been distorted and oppressed by patriarchal norms.

Hélène Cixous explored the contradiction inherent in the hierarchal authority of male-dominated societies and how this has impacted women's experiences. She argues that this had created a contradiction between male and female subjectivity, where men were seen as the dominant subject, and women were relegated to the position of the other. This, according to Cixous, resulted in a power imbalance that reinforced patriarchal values and practices.

To challenge this imbalance, Cixous believes women must embrace their own subjectivity and agency by rejecting traditional gender roles and norms and exploring alternative ways of being in the world. Influenced by Derridean deconstruction, Cixous considers the binary hierarchy to be a relationship of violence, where the feminine term is always subordinated or erased. She pointedly notes: "Intention: desire, authority— examine them, and you are led right back . . . to the father. It is impossible not to notice that there is no place for women in the calculations"(Cixous quoted by Mambrol 2016).

Cixous introduced the Poststructuralist Feminist theory, in which she rejects the idea of a fixed, essential woman or femininity. Instead, she emphasizes the fluidity and multiplicity of gender identities, challenging the idea of a universal female experience. Cixous recognizes that women's experiences are shaped by a complex interplay of factors, including race, class, sexuality, and cultural context of language and discourse in shaping our understanding of gender and power.

For her part, Judith Butler extensively worked on the social construction of gender, the relationship between power and identity, and the politics of recognition while

being critical of the traditional philosophical approaches that centered on universal and essentialist conceptions of identity and subjectivity, which she argues were based on patriarchal assumptions that excluded and marginalized women. Like Cixous, Butler contends that gender is not a fixed or essential aspect of identity but rather a constantly produced and reproduced construction through social and cultural practices shaped by power and privilege.

Cixous, in her seminal work "The Laugh of the Medusa," echoes this view by highlighting how women, historically subjugated and silenced by patriarchal structures, have developed a unique resilience and adaptability in their identities. She writes, "Thanks to their history, women today know (how to do and want) when men will be able to conceive of only much later... [Woman] has constituted herself necessarily as that 'person' capable of losing a part of herself without losing her integrity" (Cixous 1976, 875–893). This perspective underscores the fluidity and multiplicity of identity that both Cixous and Butler advocate for, challenging the rigidity of traditional gender norms.

1.2.3   Feminist Theory and Matriarchal Philosophy

While matriarchal philosophy is a specific concept that pertains to societies or cultures organized around maternal principles, where women hold primary power and authority, matriarchal societies are often contrasted with patriarchal societies organized around male authority and paternal principles. The debate among scholars continues on whether matriarchal societies have actually existed (see Annex A for further

discussion),[28] but the concept has been influential among feminist theorists and within the feminist movement.

Feminist theory encompasses a diverse range of ideas and practices that aim to understand and address gender inequality and the oppression of women. It challenges patriarchal structures and norms, advocating for gender equality and social justice.[29] It emerged in the women's movement of the 1960s and early 1970s and has since evolved into a broad and diverse field of study that encompasses various perspectives and approaches, as well as a wide range of ideas and practices.

Feminist theory and matriarchal philosophy remain two distinct but interrelated fields of thought. While the Feminist theory is concerned with the study of gender and how it shapes our social, political, and economic lives, matriarchal philosophy is focused on studying societies and cultures that are organized around female leadership and power.

Matriarchal societies are typically characterized by an emphasis on cooperation, consensus-building, and community, in contrast to the competition and individualism often associated with patriarchal structures. These societies emphasize gender-egalitarian principles, where both sexes contribute equally to social functioning, and women are central to social organization. As Heide Göttner-Abendroth notes, "Matriarchies are true

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[28] Annex A offers a nuanced understanding of matriarchal traditions by examining the debate surrounding the existence of matriarchal societies and their philosophical significance. It addresses scholarly challenges and explores evidence of societies with matrilineal or matrifocal structures. The Annex also includes a detailed list of influential women, highlighting their roles in theology, philosophy, and leadership, thereby enriching the discussion with historical examples.

[29] For foundational discussions in feminist theory, see bell hooks, *Feminism is for Everybody: Passionate Politics*(Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 2000), where hooks discusses the importance of consciousness-raising groups in building a mass-based feminist movement, stating that "the consciousness-raising group was a site for conversion" and "a meeting place" for organizing women (hooks, *Feminism is for Everybody*, 8). Also, see Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (New York: Vintage Books, 1953), where de Beauvoir examines the construction of women as the "Other," famously stating, "One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman" (de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, 273).

gender-egalitarian societies; this applies to the social contribution of both sexes—and even though women are at the center, this principle governs the social functioning and freedom of both sexes"(Göttner-Abendroth 2013, xv).[30]

In this context, Luce Irigaray argues that traditional models of subjectivity and identity are based on male norms and ideals, and that women must develop new forms of subjectivity and language to challenge these dominant cultural norms. For Irigaray, language and culture have historically privileged male experiences and suppressed the voices and perspectives of women (Donovan n.d.).[31] Irigaray also takes issue with psychoanalysis, particularly the work of Freud, arguing that it has constructed a model of inherently patriarchal subjectivity and has failed to account for how gender and sexuality are constructed within cultural and linguistic frameworks. However, Irigaray's emphasis on sexual difference drew criticism as it was seen by a number of her contemporaries as reinforcing gender binaries and limiting the possibilities for more fluid and diverse forms of identity and subjectivity.[32]

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[30] Heide Göttner-Abendroth describes matriarchal societies as operating without the hierarchical structures typical of patriarchal systems. She emphasizes that matriarchies should not be regarded as mere inverses of patriarchies with dominating women, but rather as societies that have never needed such hierarchical structures (Göttner-Abendroth, *Matriarchal Societies: Studies on Indigenous Cultures Across the Globe* [New York: Peter Lang, 2013], xv).

[31] For a detailed discussion of Irigaray's critique of traditional subjectivity and the role of language in perpetuating patriarchal norms, see Sarah K. Donovan, "Luce Irigaray," *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, accessed [date], https://iep.utm.edu/irigaray/. Donovan provides an in-depth analysis of how Irigaray challenges Freud's psychoanalytic theories and their implications for the construction of gender and sexuality within cultural and linguistic contexts.

[32] Judith Butler critiques Irigaray's reliance on sexual difference, arguing that it reinforces a binary framework. Butler explains that for Irigaray, "grammar can never be a true index of gender relations precisely because it supports the substantial model of gender as a binary relation between two positive terms." This binary model, Butler suggest, " masks the univocal and hegemonic discourse of the masculine, phallogocentrism, silencing the feminine as a site of subversive multiplicity" (Butler 1990,25). Butler further explains how Wittig directly challenges Irigaray, arguing that it does not break form the binary logic of masculine/feminine but instead reifies it. "Wittig argues that positions like Irigaray 's reconsolidate the binary between masculine and feminine and recirculate a mythic notion of the feminine" (Butler 1990,35)

Judith Butler explains that Simone de Beauvoir and Luce Irigaray have different views on how gender inequality is reproduced. On the one hand, de Beauvoir suggests that it happens due to a failed exchange between men and women, whereas Irigaray argues that it is due to a male-dominated way of thinking that shapes our understanding of the world. On the other hand, Butler, while expanding on this by discussing the feminist essentialism debate, questions the universality of female identity and oppression. She criticizes the category of "women" for being normative and potentially excluding considerations of class and racial privilege. Butler emphasizes the importance of fostering coalitional politics, where diverse women can articulate their distinct identities within an emerging coalition, but she warns against assuming a predetermined form of coalition or unity. Instead, she suggests that acknowledging fragmentation and allowing provisional unities to emerge in concrete actions without assuming a stable and agreed-upon identity may facilitate more effective coalitional action (Butler 1999, 20).

However, while Irigaray's critique is important, Butler argues that it has its limitations. Her view of a global, monolithic, and masculine system ignores the specific cultural and historical contexts in which gender inequality takes place. By trying to include other cultures as examples of the same phallogocentrism, she risks taking on the same colonizing gesture that she criticizes. To Butler, it is, therefore, important to acknowledge and understand the unique ways in which gender oppression operates in different cultural contexts. This requires a more nuanced and culturally-specific approach that recognizes and respects cultural differences rather than impose a single, global theory of gender inequality (Butler 1999, 22-24).

In *Gender Trouble (1990)*, Butler further argues that traditional models of Feminism have often reinforced gender binaries by assuming that women have a fixed and essential identity separate from men. To Butler, as noted earlier, gender is not simply a matter of biology or innate identity but a set of practices and behaviors that are constantly performed and enacted. Gender, according to Butler, is not something we have but rather something that we do and perform, and it is through our repeated performances that gender comes to be seen as a fixed and natural identity. Butler's concept of performativity is particularly influential in challenging traditional models of Feminism and opening up new possibilities for understanding the complexity and diversity of human experience. To Butler, "Gender is a complexity whose totality is permanently deferred, never fully what it is at any given juncture in time" (Butler 1999, 22)**.**

Gloria Anzaldúa also contributed to Feminist theory and Queer theory, as well as *Chicano* studies, within an intersectional approach to identity, emphasizing the importance of language, culture, and embodiment in shaping experience and subjectivity. As a *Chicana* lesbian feminist, Anzaldúa argues that Feminist theory must include diverse experiences and identities, and work on challenging dominant cultural norms and power structures. To Anzaldúa, the intersectionality between gender, race, and sexuality and how each intersects with identities can produce unique experiences of oppression and resistance.

In *Borderlands- La Frontera the New Mestiza* (1987), Anzaldúa describes cultural hybridity and transformation spaces. Borderlands, whether physical or metaphorical, are sites of conflict and possibility that can allow new forms of identity and subjectivity to appear. Anzaldúa emphasizes the importance of language in shaping experience and

identity. She argues that marginalized groups must reclaim and transform language to resist dominant cultural norms and create new possibilities for themselves. Thus, a new form of consciousness is formed, which she calls "*mestiza* consciousness" (Anzaldúa 1987), with that emerging from the experience of living in the Borderlands.[33] This form of consciousness, according to Anzaldúa, is essential for feminist and social justice movements, as it allows for new forms of coalition-building and resistance that can transcend traditional boundaries and categories.

Donna Haraway contributed to expanding the scope of Feminist theory and challenging traditional understandings of gender by applying String-figuring and Situated Knowledges to her approach. Haraway is critical of Essentialism, which she argues had led to supporting a narrow view of feminist politics that focused solely on identity and representation. She further argues that this approach can neglect the material conditions that shape women's lives and experiences and lead to a form of politics that shapes women's lives and individual identity rather than to systemic change. Yet, her concept of the *Cyborg*, which she describes as a hybrid of human and machine, drew criticism as promoting a vision of technology that is divorced from its social and political context. Such critiques ignore the challenges involved in developing a Feminist theory that is both theoretically sophisticated and applicable to addressing the complex and intersectional nature of gender inequality. However, Haraway's work remains influential in expanding our understanding of the relationship between technology, identity, and power.

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[33] Gloria Anzaldúa discusses the concept of "living in" the Borderlands, which she describes as existing in a state of liminality, in-betweenness, and ambiguity. The Borderlands represent a space where diverse cultures and identities intersect, mix, and often clash. In this space, individuals must navigate and reconcile multiple and conflicting social, cultural, and linguistic norms. See Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 1987).

For her part, Sandra Harding criticized Feminist theory for often replicating the same Eurocentric and masculinist assumptions that it seeks to challenge. That is why Harding argues that Feminist theory must move beyond simply including women in existing intellectual frameworks, and must also work to transform these frameworks to include fundamentally diverse epistemologies and perspectives.

Harding emphasizes the role of social location in shaping knowledge and epistemology. She argues that different social locations, such as race, gender, and class, can give rise to different ways of knowing and understanding the world and that Feminist theory must work to value and incorporate this diverse perspective in what she calls Standpoint theory. As elaborated in Section 1.3 below, through that theory, Harding argues that knowledge is always situated within specific social and historical contexts, and that marginalized groups may have unique insights that are not accessible to those in positions of power.

1.3 Comparative Assessment of the Philosophical Discourse on Viewing Women as the "Other"

It may be recalled from the discussion in section 1.1 above that I questioned the utility, if not the feasibility, of trying to redress the patriarchal dominance of the philosophical canons by adopting an approach to philosophical discourse that is at once rooted in matriarchy and, in a fundamental sense, antithetical to the patriarchal approach. With patriarchal dominance in this context generally taken to mean the time-honored dominance of men philosophers, there are several limitations that would seem to lend credence to the skepticism with which I view such an endeavor.

To begin with, the fact that men have for much too long dominated philosophical discourse does not mean that, when it comes to the minoritization of women, their contributions were inspired by the same, or even similar, motives. The same can be said about the thought processes and perspectives that informed those contributions. To assume otherwise would be to readily accept the proposition that, simply by virtue of their gender, men philosophers tend to think and reason similarly, particularly on issues related to the status of women in society. The validity of such a proposition may usefully be examined in the context of a consideration of the long-running debate on whether gender is biologically determined or socioculturally shaped.

If the former, one would then be at a loss trying to figure out what might explain observed differences in men philosophers' views in general while still maintaining that men's dominance in philosophy has always conspired to produce knowledge that systematically led to women being viewed as the "other" to be marginalized. Is it the working assumption here that, despite some minor or not-so-minor culturally-induced differences, the biologically-determined maleness supersedes and overwhelms all other influences and always works to produce outcomes that oppress women?

If, on the other hand, one were to fully subscribe to the view that gender is the product of sociocultural influences, then the question arises as to whether it is conceivable that such influences have always and systematically conspired to produce outcomes that minoritized women. An affirmative answer to this question may be problematic on several grounds.

First, as discussed in Annex A to this chapter, it is unlikely that the sociocultural influences in question were prevalent in societies that featured matriarchal social orders,

with women holding senior-most positions of political authority. Second, it is not easy to understand how the said influences have persisted in the face of the dramatic sociocultural changes that have taken place as a result of the feminist movement's valiant advocacy for women's rights over the past six decades. Third, and perhaps most importantly, if it is to be taken as a given that the predominance of patriarchy in philosophy underlay the failure of philosophical canons to adequately inform attempts at redressing the injustice endured by women, then maleness is the key culprit. But then, if the non-essentialist view of gender is of universal validity, it must be the case that such a view would implausibly have it that, rather than directly, sociocultural influences shape thought processes mainly, if not only, through the role they play in the formation of gender identity.

Thinking through these and other questions in the light of the powerful, paradigm-shifting contributions of the philosophical works reviewed in this chapter, I came to the conclusion that there was a need for a nuanced approach to questioning the alleged inadequacy of philosophical canons for addressing the injustice endured by women. Toward that end, a useful starting point may lie in questioning the premise that the philosophical canons were predominantly patriarchal, and, if so, in what sense they were so.

Indeed, to the extent that what is meant by patriarchal dominance is the dominance of men philosophers in philosophical discourse, there is every reason to question the extent to which maleness is a uniform trait and whether, even if it were so, it works to shape men philosophers' thought processes uniformly or to the same extent. For if biology concretely determines maleness, the latter does not necessarily imply the

existence of manliness to the same extent, or its capacity to influence or shape thought processes uniformly. By extension, questioning the validity of the premise that posits the prevalence of patriarchy in philosophical discourse casts doubt on the potential for merely replacing the dominant philosophical canons with a matriarchal analogue of theirs to make a dent in the quest for the attainment of justice for women.

It was against the backdrop of this reasoning that I found refuge in Luce Irigaray's *Theory of Sexual Difference*, cited earlier in this section 1.3, wherein she makes the case for an inclusive approach to philosophical discourse that, in her view, would stand not by erasing or homogenizing gender, sexuality, and cultural differences, but by valuing them, and by including women's perspectives and experiences in the discourse. Thus, to Irigaray, at issue is the need not to do away with the traditional philosophical discourse, but to modify it by incorporating women's perspectives and experiences, thereby making it just for men and women alike.

Even though Judith Butler was highly critical of the essentialist view of gender difference that is central to Irigaray's theory, I found considerable grounds for agreement between the most consequential contributions of these two women philosophers when it comes to trying to get an understanding of why it is that women are done injustice by the application of traditional philosophical discourse that is shaped by a predominantly patriarchal orientation. It would help matters, though, if, for starters, if what Butler had to say with regard to the role of societal influences in determining gender is interpreted to mean determining gender roles and norms rather than gender itself. (Incidentally, much the same interpretation could usefully be applied to Simone de Beauvoir's famous line that a woman becomes a woman).

But even without the benefit of such an interpretation, the philosophical luminaries, whose works were cited earlier in this section 1.3, were virtually completely unanimous in considering that the exclusion of women from the politics of the formation of societal norms and institutions lay at the core of them being viewed and—through the oppression of the workings of those norms and institutions—even viewing themselves, as the marginalized "other." Indeed, Butler herself was quite explicit on this important point, as were, in addition to Irigaray, de Beauvoir, Daly, Foucault, Harding, and Haraway.

To redress the injustice endured by women as a result of excluding their perspectives from the discourse, Hélène Cixous rightly pointed to the need for women not only to reject the traditional gender roles and norms, but also to proactively project their own subjectivity and their own being in the world. This line of advocacy by Cixous was the defining hallmark of multiple philosophical contributions by her famed Egyptian contemporary, Nawāl Saʿadāwī, who considered that being the daughter of an ancient Egyptian goddess freed her and, by extension, all women, from having to define their own being and identity in relation to an "other," with that other being the man.

An obvious issue that arises from this binary worldview of the sexes is the corollary that all women are the same—a view that is no less difficult to maintain than that which holds that all men are the same. To be sure, Irigaray, for one, explicitly challenged such a worldview, which incidentally may have been instrumental in turning the discourse on gender roles and norms into a gender warfare.

My focus on the great value of finding traces of common ground between biological essentialists (those who believe that gender is determined by biology), on the

one hand, and cultural essentialists (those who believe that sociocultural influences determine gender), on the other, serves the useful purpose of bridging a seemingly unbridgeable gap between these two schools of thought.[34]

In addition to interpreting the reference to gender by cultural essentialists as meaning gender roles and norms, one can usefully deploy, toward that end, key implications that attach to the concept of manliness, which I introduced earlier in this section 1.3.

Unlike gender, which, is fixed at birth, its manifestations—namely, manliness and its corresponding womanhood-equivalent, womanliness, can be, and indeed they are likely to be, fluid. In this construction, the binary worldview of the sexes is not at all inconsistent with the concept of gender fluidity. This is so, I argue, because the notion of fluidity pertains to the manifestation of each sex, and thus it is shaped both in extent and form, by sociocultural influences. Accordingly, it is the manifestation of the respective genders of men and women that varies along what may be called a "*humanness continuum*" that is notionally bound by complete manliness at one end and complete womanliness at the other, with virtually all men and women situated variously along that continuum, and with each embodying a mix of the two traits that is determined by sociocultural influences.

Such a construction, though completely theoretical, does have some elements of plausibility that derives from the great many similarities that do exist between men and

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[34] For discussions on the ongoing debate between biological and cultural Essentialism in feminist theory, see Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"* (London: Routledge, 2011), where Butler examines how "sex" is not merely a static condition of the body but a process wherein regulatory norms materialize "sex" through a forcible reiteration of those norms, which are never fully complete (xi-xii). Also see Elizabeth Grosz, *Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), where Grosz argues that "the scope and limit of the body's pliability is not yet adequately understood; nor is the biologically constitutive role played by the significances and meanings attributed to bodies" (p. 190).

women—an obvious fact, but one that is often overlooked in philosophical discourse in the heat of debates about, and preoccupation with, gender differences. Trying to identify and understand gender differences is key to advancing the capacity of philosophical discourse to inform the formulation of policies that can lead to the inclusion of women's perspectives and experiences in the formation of societal norms, which in turn will inevitably lead to women realizing all the rights and privileges that derive from their humanness. And so—indeed, maybe even more so—is appreciating the value of the similarities between men and women and taking full advantage of those in the pursuit of the objective of bringing to a complete end women being viewed as the marginalized "other." After all, but for the variance embodied in the twenty-third of the twenty-three pairs of the chromosomes that normally exist in all human cells, there would be no differences to speak of between men and women.

1.4 Revisiting Philosophical Paradigms through String-figuring, Situated Knowledges, and Intersectionality

Haraway's Situated Knowledges challenges the assumption that knowledge is produced from a detached, objective standpoint. It argues instead that all knowledge is situated within specific contexts and power dynamics. This understanding requires a critical re-examination of all positions, recognizing that no single perspective holds absolute truth but rather contributes to a more complex and nuanced understanding when considered alongside others.

String-figuring extends this idea by providing a model for understanding knowledge as interconnected and relational, integrating different ways of knowing into a

more comprehensive whole. For example, historical representations of women in ancient civilizations—such as goddesses who symbolized power—must be understood not just in isolation, but within the broader cultural and contextual frameworks that shaped their significance.

By incorporating Intersectionality into this framework, String-figuring and Situated Knowledges also account for how multiple axes of identity intersect to influence experiences and knowledge production. For example, a feminist analysis that only considers gender without accounting for race or class would be incomplete. String-figuring, therefore, encourages a multidimensional approach to knowledge, recognizing that social identities are interwoven and that their intersections produce unique standpoints that must be included in any comprehensive understanding of knowledge.

The ideas of philosophers like Nietzsche, Kierkegaard, Sartre, Foucault, Simondon, Said, and others have also been analyzed in the context of Situated Knowledges and String-figuring approaches in philosophy. These analyses highlight the limitations of traditional philosophical structures and the potential for more inclusive and diverse approaches to knowledge production.

1.4.1   Nietzsche's Perspectivism

Nietzsche's idea of perspectivism, which holds that "perspectivity is the fundamental condition of all life" (Nietszche quoted by Yeop 2009, 99), is crucial to understanding the concept of Situated Knowledges. Nietzsche argues that all knowledge is inherently shaped by the perspectives from which it is produced, and he takes issue with the very idea that knowledge could come from a neutral, detached standpoint.

Nietzsche dismisses the notion that "the things of the highest value" could arise "from this transitory, seductive, deceptive, paltry world" and insists instead that their origin must be "from the lap of Being, the intransitory, the hidden god, the thing-in-itself—and nowhere else" (Nietzsche 1966, 10). He further argues that "there would be no life at all if not on the basis of perspective estimates and appearances" (Nietzsche 1966, 46). This critique extends to his suspicion of the traditional will to truth. Nietzsche provocatively asks, "Suppose we want truth: why not rather untruth? and uncertainty? even ignorance?" (Nietzsche 1966, 9). Thus, according to Nietzsche, there is no "view from nowhere" or objective standpoint that transcends these perspectives. This claim challenges the Enlightenment ideal of objective, universal knowledge, suggesting instead that what we consider "truth" is always a product of the values, emotions, and power dynamics of particular perspectives.

Nietzsche's perspectivism opens the door to a more nuanced understanding of knowledge, where different experiences and perspectives must be acknowledged as integral to the production of knowledge. This idea resonates strongly with the concept of Situated Knowledges, which emphasizes the importance of acknowledging the specific contexts and locations from which knowledge arises. It is within this framework that Nietzsche lays the groundwork for subsequent thinkers, who explore how power and perspective shape what is considered knowledge.

1.4.2   Kierkegaard's Existential Speculation

Kierkegaard's existential speculation significantly enriches the understanding of Situated Knowledges, String-figuring, and Intersectionality by foregrounding the

importance of personal experience and existential choice in shaping one's knowledge and understanding of the world. His philosophy introduces a crucial tension between abstract, universal knowledge and the deeply personal, subjective experience of the individual.

Kierkegaard criticizes the idea that truth can be fully grasped through detached, objective knowledge. He argues that while universal concepts may provide a framework for understanding, they fail to account for the subjective and personal dimensions of truth, which are rooted in individual experience and personal commitment. As noted in *The Cambridge Companion to Kierkegaard*, "Speculation, whether Platonic or Hegelian, is a mode of objectivity in which the finitude of the subject is stripped away for the sake of an objective, universal, timeless apprehension of the truth" (Hannay and Marino, eds., 2024, p. 111). Indeed, Kierkegaard asserts that "The eternal truth must not be understood abstractly but must be understood as the essential truth that has an essential relation to existence or, more correctly, to the existing person" (Kierkegaard 1992, 48).

While speculative reasoning can offer general frameworks, Kierkegaard argues that it neglects the personal and existential dimensions of knowledge. As he puts it, "Herewith is dismissed all the bombastic prattle that eternally there is no paradox and that true speculative thought does not stop with the paradox" (Kierkegaard 1992, 49). Thus, for Kierkegaard, truth is dynamic and shaped by personal experience and existential struggle.

Kierkegaard's critique of speculative thought is central to his philosophy. He argues that speculative reasoning must be complemented by what he calls "subjective truth"—truth as lived and experienced by the individual. Reason, when employed in a purely speculative manner, fails to grasp the fragmented nature of human existence,

leading to misunderstandings of existential conditions. This focus on the individual's

lived experience underscores the tension between abstract philosophical systems and the

complexities of real, embodied life.

1.4.3   Sartre's Existentialism

Sartre's Existentialism, which emphasizes the individual's subjective experience,

is crucial to understanding the situatedness of knowledge. Sartre's famous dictum that

"existence precedes essence" encapsulates his belief that individuals are not defined by a

pre-existing essence or identity but must create their own essence through lived

experiences and choices (Sartre 2007, 22). This idea emphasizes that knowledge and

identity are not static or universal but are constantly shaped by the specific circumstances

and decisions of the individual. Furthermore, Sartre's philosophy is rooted in the idea that

"individuals are condemned to be free," meaning they are thrust into existence without

any predefined essence and are responsible for defining themselves through their choices.

In *Being and Nothingness*, he asserts that "man being condemned to be free carries the

weight of the whole world on his shoulders; he is responsible for the world and for

himself as a way of being" (Sartre 1957, 553). This responsibility extends beyond mere

personal choices; it encompasses the broader implications of those choices within the

world one inhabits.

Sartre further emphasizes that this freedom is inescapable, leaving individuals

"alone, without excuse," meaning that they cannot shift the burden of their decisions onto

others or external circumstances (Sartre 1957, 556). As Sartre states, "from the instant of

my upsurge into being, I carry the weight of the world by myself alone," highlighting the

profound solitude that comes with this responsibility (Sartre 1957, 555). This existential

condition means that individuals must create their own meaning in a world that offers no

inherent purpose, and this creation is always situated within the specific context of their

lived experiences and the choices they make. This focus on individual subjectivity

directly aligns with the concept of Situated Knowledges, which posits that knowledge is

not abstract or universal but is instead contingent on the individual's particular

circumstances, perspectives, and freedom. Just as Sartre argues that one's existence and

identity are inseparable from the context in which they are situated, the concept of

Situated Knowledges suggests that all knowledge is shaped by the specific conditions and

power dynamics of its production.

1.4.4   Foucault's Power/Knowledge dynamic

Foucault's work on power and knowledge is particularly relevant to the concept of

Situated Knowledges. He argues that knowledge is not merely a reflection of reality but is

deeply "polemical and strategic," shaped by power struggles and functioning as a tool in

these battles (Foucault 2003, 22). In *Discipline and Punish* (1977), Foucault explores

how power operates through knowledge by structuring societal institutions and norms,

stating that "power produces knowledge… power and knowledge directly imply one

another" (Foucault 1977, 27). This implies that knowledge is not neutral but is produced

within power relations to reinforce or resist dominant structures.

Foucault expands on this in *The History of Sexuality, Volume 1*(1978), where he

discusses how power is omnipresent and diffused throughout the social body, rather than

emanating from a central source, arguing that "power is everywhere; not because it

embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere" (Foucault 1978, 93). This understanding of power as diffused throughout the social body aligns with the idea that knowledge is always produced from specific, situated perspectives that are influenced by power dynamics.

Furthermore, in *Society Must Be Defended* (2003), Foucault introduces the concept of "subjugated knowledges," which includes both historical knowledges that have been buried by dominant discourses and local knowledges marginalized by the scientific hierarchy (Foucault 2003, 9-10). Foucault asserts that genealogy—a method he describes as the "the coupling together of the buried scholarly knowledge and knowledges that were disqualified by the hierarchy of erudition and sciences" (Foucault 2003, 8)—seeks to reactivate these subjugated knowledges as a means of challenging the coercive power structures embedded within traditional scientific discourse (Foucault 2003, 7-10).

1.4.5   Simondon's Theory of Individuation

Simondon's theory of individuation complements these ideas by emphasizing that knowledge is not static but is dynamically generated through the ongoing process of individuation. In his seminal work *Individuation in Light of Notions of Form and Information* (1964), Simondon argues that individuals and their environments are co-constitutive, meaning that knowledge is always emerging from the interaction between the individual and his/her context. He posits that individuation is a continuous process, where the individual is never fully formed but is always in the process of becoming in relation to their surroundings. As Simondon states, "Individuation does not only concern

the genesis of individuals; it also concerns their ongoing transformation and the continuing evolution of the structures that constitute them" (Simondon 2020, 23).

Simondon is critical to the Western philosophical tradition for its "substantialistic" approach, which "has ignored the knowledge of the real individual because it could not grasp the latter in its genesis" (Simondon [1964] 2020, 87). He points out that while the synthesis of being and becoming has been attempted at various levels, it has not been fully realized, particularly in understanding the genesis of living beings, which remains "an object of research" (Simondon 2020, 87). He explains that traditional views of being have failed to account for the dynamic nature of individuation, where knowledge is generated through the tension between disparate realities. According to Simondon, "information is never relative to a single and homogeneous reality but to two orders in a state of disparation," meaning that it emerges from the interaction of conflicting or disparate elements, leading to the individuation process (Simondon 2020, 12). This perspective challenges the notion of knowledge as a static, isolated product and instead highlights how knowledge is a dynamic process continually shaped by the interactions between different entities and their contexts.

This process-oriented view of individuation aligns with the concept of String-figuring, which similarly emphasizes the interconnectedness of subjects and objects in knowledge production. Just as Simondon views individuation as a dynamic process involving the constant negotiation between the individual and their milieu, String-figuring underscores that knowledge is produced through the ongoing interactions between different entities within specific contexts. As Simondon notes, "The individual and the environment are not separate entities; rather, they are two aspects of the same

reality, continuously co-evolving" (Simondon 2005, 28). This perspective challenges the traditional notion of knowledge as a static, isolated product, instead highlighting how knowledge is perpetually co-created through relational processes.

1.4.6   Said's Orientalism

Edward Said builds on these ideas by examining how Western knowledge of the East has been constructed from a specific position of power and privilege. In his seminal work *Orientalism* (1978), Said argues that the Western portrayal of Eastern societies has been shaped by a long history of Colonialism and Imperialism. This knowledge, far from being objective or neutral, is deeply entangled with the power dynamics that allowed the West to dominate and control the East. Said's analysis reveals how the construction of the "Orient" as the exotic, backward, and uncivilized "other" served to justify Western imperial policies and maintain the cultural and political hegemony of the West.

Said's concept of Orientalism demonstrates how knowledge is produced within specific power structures and serves to reinforce those structures. He shows that the Western portrayal of the East is not just a benign misrepresentation but is a deliberate and strategic construction that has real-world consequences. This aligns with the concept of Situated Knowledges, which emphasizes that all knowledge is produced from a particular standpoint and is shaped by the social, political, and historical context in which it is produced. Said's work underscores the importance of recognizing the power dynamics that shape knowledge production and the need to challenge dominant narratives that marginalize or distort other perspectives.

1.5 Synthesis: The Case for a Multi-Pronged Approach to Understanding Otherness

There can be no disagreement that philosophy is a compelling choice of realm for trying to get to an understanding of the root causes of injustice, including those underlying the marginalization of minorities in societies around the world, and to consider ways by which anti-minority biases may be eradicated. However, the fact that such biases have persisted and spared no minority category over time called into question the adequacy of the philosophical canons for informing policymaking on minority issues. And, with women undoubtedly having endured the longest-running, minority-driven marginalization in history, it is not surprising that those claims of inadequacy revolved around the assertion that the predominantly patriarchal orientation of philosophical discourse was to blame for the shortcomings of the philosophical canons.

While the analysis in the first two sections 1.1 and 1.2 of this chapter suggests the need for a broader perspective in debating the adequacy of philosophical canons for addressing the injustices endured by women, the said analysis also makes it clear that even such an expanded lens may not fully capture the complexities involved.[35] Specifically, while it seems that the characterization of the philosophical canons as being predominantly patriarchal was well founded, it is not entirely clear that such dominance could by itself bias the philosophical canons against women. For, as argued in section 1.3 of this chapter, if biology concretely determines and defines maleness, the latter does not

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[35] For an exploration of how feminist epistemology critiques traditional scientific approaches and emphasizes the role of social conditions in shaping knowledge, see Sandra Harding, *Whose Science? Whose Knowledge?: Thinking from Women's Lives* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991), 12, 47. Harding argues that "what it means to be scientific is to be dispassionate, disinterested, impartial, concerned with abstract principles and rules; but what it means to be a woman is to be emotional, interested in and partial to the welfare of family and friends, concerned with concrete practices and contextual relations" (12). She further contends that "these features of womanliness are not the consequences of biology—let alone of inferior biology. Rather, they arise from a variety of social conditions that are more characteristic of women's lives than of the lives of men in the dominant groups" (47).

necessarily define or imply manliness, certainly not to such a uniform extent as to validate the presumption of even the existence of a philosophical paradigm or construction with a pure patriarchal is, manly orientation.

Generally speaking, this line of reasoning would also call into question the utility of attempting to replace the patriarchal construction with a matriarchal approach that is narrowly construed to be merely the obverse of the patriarchal approach. For, so narrowly construed, a matriarchal approach is unlikely to, by itself, adequately inform the quest for the elimination of discrimination against women.

It is in this sense that serious potential flaws may well attach to postulating the existence of a matriarchal approach and asserting its superiority to the patriarchal order— as presumed to exist in philosophy—for the purposes of dealing with the prejudice toward the largest of all minority groups—namely, women. Nevertheless, the examination of this and similar hypotheses in the previous sections of this chapter was not in vain. For, quite to the contrary, it served the useful purpose of laying bare the pitfalls that are inherent to thinking that there are easy answers to questions related to human behavior. It, therefore, also highlighted the need to adopt an approach to philosophical inquiry and discourse that is inclusive and encompassing of fundamentally differing perspectives. In addition, such an examination opens the door for questioning not only the adequacy of the philosophical canons themselves, but also the effectiveness of their application, which in turn could lead to usefully shifting the focus of inquiry to a consideration of the role played by agents of change in the quest for eliminating the prejudice toward women.

To elaborate, arguably, a lot more goes into forming and fermenting prejudice against women and other minorities, as well as acting it out, than can be explained by simply attributing that bias to the gender- or geographical orientation of knowledge or philosophical canons, even if one could speak unequivocally of the binary existence of patriarchal-matriarchal and West-East orientations in philosophy.

To the extent they exist, and in whatever form they take on, such orientations may play a role in conditioning philosophers to think in certain ways. But it would be a stretch to argue that they entirely shape thought processes and much less that they can determine knowledge or the contours of its accumulation. Rather, they would tend to do so within frameworks of multi-way interactions with other, often-interrelated influences through filters that are largely selected on the basis of their congruence with the dispositions and perspectives of individual thinkers, philosophers, and agents of change. As I argue in this chapter, those influences collectively shape thinkers' perspectives, and they do so not necessarily or exclusively through their impact on their sense of gender identity.

This is mainly why an approach to the application of philosophical canons in a manner that involves deploying a String-figuring methodology to connect knowledges situated in Standpoints opened the door to the pursuit of knowledge in a way relevant to the attainment of such overriding objective as social inclusion and harmony. After all, standpoints are the product of perspectives and dispositions playing a key role in the effort to position and interpret knowledge.

When it comes to matters of perspective and disposition, it is arguably the case that those are primarily shaped by a thinker's own sense of identity and life experience; and with those not likely to be identically or uniformly shared, careful consideration

needs to be given to capitalizing on this diversity rather than allowing it to be a cause of hindrance or discord. Toward that end, an essential first step would be to contextualize the inquiry of interest, with a particular focus on the need for its outcome to be relevant to the attainment of the overarching objective of improving the human condition.

Secondly, with that objective being more specifically defined as managing diversity in ways that can lead to more inclusive societies, it would be of paramount importance to have the pursuit of knowledge that is to form the basis for policy-making informed by as many diverse perspectives as possible. This would help ensure that outcomes are better aligned with the values of all, with particular emphasis on the need to safeguard the interests of marginalized and disadvantaged minorities.

All this points to the importance of adopting a multi-pronged approach to the study of minority issues for the purpose of elaborating strategies aimed at the attainment of more inclusive societies. Adopting the String-figuring paradigm would serve that purpose. For not only does it shift the focus of inquiry away from the question of whether a particular orientation of philosophical cannons is superior to others, but it more usefully highlights the importance of an examination of how a multitude of relevant factors interact to determine and shape the existing reality of the perennial existence of "the threatening other." This would be key to any effort aimed at bringing about a sense of togetherness that is rooted in the recognition of the humanness of all people rather than the lesser goal of equality as the overriding organizing principle in the pursuit of societal harmony and inclusion.

Such would be the essence of what a truly matriarchal approach to philosophy should be about—namely, an incubator of knowledge and a crucible for its accumulation

through interaction between a multitude of perspectives, with those shaped by individual

thinkers' own sense of identity and their lived experiences.

Annexes

Annex A: On the Existence of a Matriarchal Social Order

It is challenging to assert the existence of a matriarchal philosophy as a counterpart to the patriarchal philosophy, particularly as the latter has come to be traditionally understood. Although cultural and philosophical traditions throughout history have highlighted the value of feminine qualities and perspectives, the term "matriarchal philosophy" often implies a simplistic binary view of gender relations that may not accurately reflect the complexity of social and cultural realities.

Reifying the dichotomy between matriarchal and patriarchal philosophy has hindered efforts to deconstruct the power dynamics underlying such binary views. This deconstruction is essential for yielding a more nuanced and complex understanding of philosophy that considers how traditionally marginalized perspectives have influenced philosophical traditions. Feminist philosophy has emerged as a vital means of examining and challenging the patriarchal assumptions that have historically shaped traditional philosophical discourse.[36] A key theme in these assumptions is the predominance of a patriarchal societal order, a development traceable to shifts in religious beliefs and practices, notably around 1800 BCE, when worship began to shift away from female deities.

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[36] For a detailed account of the emergence and goals of feminist philosophy, see Alison Stone, *An Introduction to Feminist Philosophy* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007), 1. Stone discusses how feminist philosophy arose as a critical response to the male biases present in traditional philosophy, positioning feminist thought as a significant subdiscipline that seeks to address and rectify these biases.

As Heide Göttner-Abendroth notes,

> Patriarchal domination, where a minority emerges from wars of conquest and takes over a whole culture, depends for its power on structures of enforcement, private ownership, colonial rule, and religious conversion. Such patriarchal power structures are a historically recent development, not appearing until about 4000–3000 B.C.E. (and in many parts of the world even later) and increasing in strength throughout the further spread of patriarchy. (Göttner-Abendroth 2013, xv-xvi).

In light of the misconceptions surrounding the term "matriarchy," a more careful examination of its linguistic roots is warranted as Göttner-Abendroth suggests. She asserts that the prevailing notion that matriarchy equates to the "rule of women" or "domination by mothers" needs to be challenged, as it hinges on the assumption that matriarchy is a direct parallel to patriarchy, merely with a different gender in control. Accordingly, she maintains, linguistic background of the word "arché" in Greek, which is translated to mean both "domination" and "beginning," complicates this understanding. She further explains that these two meanings are distinct and should not be conflated, a distinction evident in English, where terms like "archetype" are not translated as "dominator-type," and "archaeology" is not understood as "the teaching of domination" (Göttner-Abendroth 2013, xv-xvi).

Advocates of the universal patriarchy myth portray this relatively recent societal form as if it has been pervasive worldwide since the inception of human history. Many fictitious narratives supporting this notion have been disseminated by patriarchally-oriented theorists. Their inability to view matriarchy through a lens other than the dominator pattern leads them to search extensively for evidence of a matriarchy rooted in domination. When they find no supporting evidence in cultures conforming to their patriarchally-oriented hypothesis, they assert that matriarchies never existed. This circular reasoning is not only illogical but also a regrettable misuse of scientific inquiry.

In her book *When God Was a Woman* (1976), Merlin Stone explores the history of goddess worship and the role of women in ancient societies. She traces the roles women played as goddesses and queens in Near and Middle Eastern civilizations, presenting evidence of societies where women held power and were revered as divine beings. Stone argues that the suppression of the feminine in religion led to the oppression of women in society and advocates for a return to a more balanced and inclusive spirituality.

Stone suggests that the shift from matriarchal to patriarchal dominance in religion was gradual, driven by factors such as the rise of agriculture, which brought changes in social organization and power dynamics. She notes that before agriculture, early human societies were relatively egalitarian, with men and women playing important roles. However, as societies became more complex, hierarchies emerged, and power became concentrated, leading to patriarchal structures and the marginalization of the feminine in religion.

Stone also suggests that the Indo-European[37] peoples who migrated from the North played a significant role in this transition by introducing a more warlike, patriarchal culture centered around male dominance. This culture supplanted the peaceful, egalitarian matriarchal societies of the region, bringing with it a new religious

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[37]The shift towards patriarchy, influenced by Indo-European migrations, is evident in several regions. In Sumeria, the arrival of the Akkadians from the north led to the replacement of matrilineal clans and the worship of female deities with a patriarchal culture dominated by male gods. Ancient Greece witnessed a similar transition, where the Indo-European Greeks marginalized women and imposed male-dominated structures over earlier Minoan matriarchal influences. In Ancient Israel, the elevation of the male deity Yahweh over the female deity Asherah reflected the patriarchal takeover by the Israelites. Additionally, in India, the Indo-Aryan migration around 1500 BCE introduced a male-dominated social and religious order, as seen in the Rigveda's emphasis on patriarchal norms and the caste system. Similarly, in the Hittite Empire (1600-1200 BCE) and in the regions influenced by Aryan migrations into Iran and Central Asia, patriarchal structures became prominent, with male gods and hierarchical, militaristic societies becoming the norm.

system based on male gods and hierarchical power structures, which reinforced the emerging patriarchal social order.

That being said, there is no concrete evidence of a matriarchal philosophy as a distinct and unified tradition of thought in ancient civilizations. However, some societies and cultures were matrilineal or matrifocal, and a consideration of the prominent role played by some women in those societies could usefully inform the effort to develop an approach to philosophy that is more suited for addressing the marginalization of women and other minorities than the time-honored patriarchal approach.

The societies in question strongly emphasized women's social, political, and cultural roles. For example, the Hindu goddess tradition has several powerful and influential female deities (Adhikari 2022). The Taoist concept of Yin represents the feminine and receptive aspects of the universe. In Taoist philosophy, both men and women have different but complementary roles (Guzman, n.d.). Similarly, in Sufism, feminine imagery and metaphors often emphasize the importance of divine love and the concept of surrender or submission. The Nabatean civilization in the early centuries BCE (4th BCE -2nd CE) in the Arabian Peninsula and surrounding regions had a pantheon of gods and goddesses. *Al- Uzza* ("Al-Uzza," 2024) was depicted as a winged lioness holding a vase and wreath and remained worshipped until the advent of Islam.

The growing interest in feminist and intersectional approaches to philosophy represented a challenge to traditional philosophical assumptions and power structures that have excluded and marginalized women and other minoritized groups. While these approaches are not exclusively matriarchal, they seek to center the experiences and

perspectives of women and other marginalized groups in philosophical inquiry and knowledge production.

Nawāl Saʿadāwī believed that patriarchal structures had co-opted and subverted the power of the maternal figure, calling for a return to a more authentic expression of maternal power and love. Ancient mythologies across various cultures reflected this power through the veneration of goddesses who were often seen as embodiments of wisdom, justice, and strength.

For instance, in ancient Mesopotamia, Ishtar was revered as the goddess of love, fertility, and war (Pryke 2019). She symbolized female power and resistance to patriarchal structures, a theme that is notably depicted in the *Epic of Gilgamesh,* where her strength and influence challenge male dominance (Mark 2022). Stone highlights how Ishtar was also referred to as the "Directress of People" and "Prophetess," and archaeological records from Nimrud reveal that women served as judges and magistrates, reflecting the societal respect for female wisdom and authority (Stone 1976, 4).

In ancient Egypt, goddesses played similarly powerful roles. Isis, the goddess of magic, fertility, and motherhood, was widely worshipped and believed to possess the power to heal and protect, embodying the nurturing aspects of maternal power. Hathor, the goddess of music, dance, and fertility, represented love and sensuality, while Maat, the goddess of truth, justice, and balance, was responsible for maintaining the order and harmony of the universe. Sekhmet, the fierce goddess of war and healing, was seen as a protector of the pharaoh, capable of both destruction and curing diseases. These deities were not just symbols of female power but active participants in the ruling mythos, influencing both divine and earthly realms (Stone 1976, 4).

Stone also observed that these ancient attitudes towards the intellectual and spiritual capacities of women were far more progressive than many contemporary views. For instance, in pre-Christian Ireland, Cerridwen was the Goddess of Intelligence and Knowledge, while in ancient Greece, Demeter, alongside the Egyptian Isis, was invoked as a law-giver and a sage dispenser of righteous wisdom. The reverence for these goddesses as wise counselors and prophetesses reflects a time when female wisdom was celebrated and integrated into societal leadership (Stone 1976, 4).

Merlin Stone argues that the position of women in ancient Israelite society was significantly different from that of women in other ancient civilizations, such as Egypt and Mesopotamia. Unlike these societies, where goddesses were worshipped and women could hold positions of power, ancient Israelite women were largely excluded from authority and their roles were restricted by patriarchal social structures. According to Stone, the Hebrew Bible played a crucial role in this marginalization by depicting God exclusively as a male deity and reinforcing patriarchal norms that diminished the status of women.

Stone emphasizes that the social and legal position of Israelite women was often inferior compared to their counterparts in neighboring cultures. For example, while wealthy women in Israelite society might have had some opportunities for education and public involvement, poorer women faced stricter limitations on their roles and activities. Stone notes that the Israelite social structure was heavily patriarchal, as reflected in laws and customs that subjugated women to the authority of men.

She provides specific examples from Israelite texts that illustrate this subordination. For instance, a wife was expected to call her husband "Ba'al" or "master,"

and she was required to address him as a subject would a king.[38] The Decalogue, or Ten

Commandments, even includes a man's wife among his possessions, underscoring her

inferior status.[39] Moreover, women could not inherit property unless there were no male

heirs, and their legal vows required the consent of their fathers or husbands to be

considered valid.[40] Stone points out that men had the right to sell their daughters, further

emphasizing the restricted and commodified role of women in Israelite society.[41]

Despite these constraints, Stone acknowledges that women in ancient Israel still

shaped history and remained influential in theological texts, literature, philosophy, and

thought, even if they were not deified as goddesses like their counterparts in other

cultures (Stone 1976, 55).This historical context provides a backdrop for examining the

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[38] Genesis 3:16:*"Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you."*
This verse establishes male authority over women as a result of the fall of Adam and Eve.

[39] Exodus 20:17 (The Tenth Commandment):*"You shall not covet your neighbor's house. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his male or female servant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor."*

[40] Moses takes a specific case to God, and God instructs that the daughters' plea is just. God then establishes a law allowing daughters to inherit their father's property if no sons are present: Numbers 27:7: The daughters of Zelophehad are right. You must certainly give them property as an inheritance among their father's relatives and give their father's inheritance to them. However, later another law is established in Numbers 36:6: This is what the Lord commands for Zelophehad's daughters: They may marry anyone they please as long as they marry within their father's tribal clan." And in Numbers 36:7: No inheritance in Israel is to pass from one tribe to another, for every Israelite shall keep the tribal inheritance of their ancestors.

A woman's vows or commitments were subject to the approval of her father or husband, showing her legal dependence on male authority. Numbers 30:3-8: When a young woman still living in her father's household makes a vow to the Lord or obligates herself by a pledge... if her father hears about her vow or pledge but says nothing to her, then all her vows and every pledge by which she obligated herself will stand. But if her father forbids her when he hears about it, none of her vows or the pledges by which she obligated herself will stand.
Similarly, a husband had the authority to nullify his wife's vows Numbers 30:10-12: If a woman living with her husband makes a vow or obligates herself by a pledge under oath and her husband hears about it but says nothing to her and does not forbid her, then all her vows or the pledges by which she obligated herself will stand. But if her husband nullifies them when he hears about them, then none of the vows or pledges that came from her lips will stand. Her husband has nullified them, and the Lord will release her.

[41] Exodus 21:7:If a man sells his daughter as a servant, she is not to go free as male servants do.

significant roles women played across various ancient civilizations, whether in religious, political, or intellectual spheres.

Below is a biographical list of major women who made a lasting impact in their respective domains:

Theological and Biblical Figures:

Sarah (18th-19th century BCE): The wife of Abraham and mother of Isaac, Sarah is prominently mentioned in the Book of Genesis. As much as Abraham is the patriarch, Sarah is the matriarch of the Jewish people, playing a significant role in biblical narratives (BibleStudyTools Staff 2019).

Rebecca: The wife of Isaac and the mother of Jacob, Rebecca is another central figure in the Book of Genesis, where she is portrayed as a matriarch of the Jewish people (Bible Gateway n.d.).

Rachel: the wife of Jacob and mother of Joseph and Benjamin, also plays a crucial role in the Genesis narrative (Jack n.d.).

Tamar (18th century BCE): Tamar, daughter-in-law of Judah, is known for her bravery and resourcefulness. Her story is detailed in the Book of Genesis, where she secures her place in the lineage of Judah through her determined actions (Frymer-Kensky 1999).

Miriam (15th century BCE): Miriam, the sister of Moses and Aaron, is considered a prophetess. Her role in the Exodus from Egypt is highlighted in the Book of Genesis, where she is depicted alongside her brothers as a leader of the Israelites (Holstein 2015).

Deborah (12th century BCE): A judge and prophetess, Deborah led the Israelites to victory against the Canaanites. Her leadership and impact are vividly illustrated in Judges 4 and 5, marking her as a significant figure in Jewish history (Branch 2024).

Abigail (11th century BCE): Celebrated for her wisdom and diplomacy, Abigail is a prominent figure in the Book of Samuel. She is known for defusing a potentially violent situation involving King David and her husband, Nabal, and later becomes one of David's wives (Adelman 2021).

The Queen of Sheba: A prominent figure in biblical and later texts, the Queen of Sheba symbolizes the intersection of myth, history, and cultural exchange. First mentioned in the Bible's I Kings and II Chronicles, she journeyed to Jerusalem to test King Solomon's famed wisdom with challenging questions, offering lavish gifts in return for his answers. Although archaeological evidence for her existence remains elusive, the Queen's story is rich in its religious and cultural significance. Various interpretations, including those found in the Aramaic Targum Sheni, the Qur'ān, and the Ethiopian Kebra Negast, embellish the biblical account with elements of mythology and regional lore. The queen is sometimes associated with the Kingdom of Saba in southern Arabia or the Ethiopian Empire, but the precise location of her realm and her historical veracity continue to be debated. Despite the lack of concrete evidence, the enduring legend of the Queen of Sheba underscores her impact on cultural and historical narratives, reflecting broader themes of diplomacy, wisdom, and the exchange of knowledge across ancient civilizations (Mark 26.3.2018).

Huldah (7th century BCE): A prophetess consulted by King Josiah regarding the Book of Law, Huldah's prophecy affirmed the legitimacy of Josiah's religious reforms, solidifying her role in the biblical narrative (Kohn 2019).

While the above figures are predominantly rooted in theological contexts, women of ancient times also held significant roles as queens and political leaders, demonstrating their ability to wield power and influence in patriarchal societies.

Esther (5th century BCE): Esther emerges as a pivotal figure in Jewish history during the Persian Empire era. Her bravery and strategic acumen lead to the deliverance of the Jewish people from annihilation, an event commemorated in the Jewish holiday of Purim (Fox 2001).

Historical Figures:

Hatshepsut (15th century BCE): Hatshepsut presents a compelling case study for examining the intersection of gender and power in ancient societies. Born into privilege, Hatshepsut's rise to power was marked by her strategic maneuvering within a patriarchal system. Despite her marriage to her brother and her failure to produce a male heir, she ascended to the throne as a 'king,' adopting male iconography and the use of a false beard to assert her authority. Hatshepsut's decision to present herself as a male pharaoh, including the use of a false beard, raises important questions about the roles and perceptions of women in patriarchal societies. Her reign, spanning twenty-two years, showcases her adeptness at navigating the levers of power while cloaking her political strategies in piety and sexual reinvention. Historian Marc van de Mieroop highlights her as "one of the most celebrated and controversial women of Egypt and the ancient world"

(Mark 19.10.2016), emphasizing the dual nature of her legacy. Her reign was highly successful, contributing significantly to Egypt's stability and wealth. However, her assumption of the full power of pharaoh was unconventional, leading to controversy within Egyptian tradition. As Kara Cooney discusses in her work *The Woman Who Would Be King* (2004), Hatshepsut's approach to leadership was not only unconventional but also transformative, as she employed strategies that redefined the role of a female ruler in a male-dominated society. Cooney argues that Hatshepsut's adoption of male iconography and her strategic positioning were essential for her to navigate and solidify her power in a patriarchal system. This presents an interesting dimension to her reign, suggesting that Hatshepsut, alongside other ancient women, had to contend with and overcome significant patriarchal barriers to achieve and maintain their authority. The deliberate erasure of Hatshepsut's legacy after her death, likely orchestrated by Thutmose III, further reflects the gender dynamics at play. Her name was systematically removed from monuments and reattributed to later pharaohs, an act that underscores the extent to which her authority was contested and the lengths to which her legacy was obscured. The rediscovery of her name and role, largely credited to the orientalist Jean-François Champollion, highlights the ongoing struggle to reclaim and understand the histories of powerful women in ancient civilizations (Mark 2016).

Alexandra Salome (2nd century BCE): The wife of the Hasmonean king Alexander Jannaeus, Alexandra Salome ruled Judea as a queen. She was known for her military prowess and her attempts to reconcile factions within Jewish leadership. During her time, education was introduced to females, marking a significant shift in societal norms ("Salome" 2024).

Cleopatra VII (51-30 BCE): The last pharaoh of Egypt, Cleopatra was known for her political savvy and strategic alliances with Julius Caesar and Mark Antony. A gifted linguist and scholar, her reign was marked by important cultural and artistic achievements (Jarus 2022). Stone elaborates on how classical historians, influenced by patriarchal norms, often misinterpreted Cleopatra's role and relationships, reflecting male bias in historical accounts (Stone 1976).

Zenobia (3rd century CE): The Nabatian-Arab queen of Palmyra expanded her country's territory during her rule and challenged the Roman Empire. She led military campaigns and conquered Roman provinces in the Eastern Mediterranean, including Egypt. Under Zenobia's rule, Palmyra became a major power in the region. She encouraged the development of literature, philosophy, and science, and supported the construction of a library in Palmyra that housed thousands of manuscripts. Zenobia's reign came to an end in 272 CE when the Romans launched a massive campaign against her and captured her and her family. Despite her defeat, Zenobia is remembered as a powerful and influential leader in the history of Arab culture (Mark 2014).

Along the model of Zenobia, there have been many examples of powerful and influential women who left their mark on politics and culture.

Eudocia (5th century CE): A Byzantine Empress, Eudocia was originally from Athens and rose to prominence through her marriage to Emperor Theodosius II. She was a patron of the arts and a significant cultural figure, known for her literary works and contributions to the intellectual life of the Byzantine Empire. Eudocia's influence extended beyond the court, as she was actively involved in the religious and cultural

affairs of the empire, promoting the use of Greek literature and philosophy (Holum 1982).

Theodora (6th century CE): The wife of Emperor Justinian I of the Byzantine Empire, Theodora played an important role in politics and diplomacy. She was a strong advocate for women's rights and worked to improve the social and economic conditions of women in her empire.

In addition to these examples of women leaders, some women philosophers and thinkers contributed to literature and thought during their time. Many women philosophers throughout history made significant contributions to the field of philosophy, even though they were often excluded from formal philosophical discussions.

Hypatia of Alexandria (4th-5th century CE): A renowned philosopher and mathematician, Hypatia made significant contributions to the field of philosophy, challenging traditional patriarchal assumptions (Mark 2009).

Theano (6th century BCE): The wife of Pythagoras, Theano was a prominent philosopher and mathematician within the Pythagorean school. Her contributions to philosophy and mathematics were significant in the development of Pythagorean teachings (Klimczak 2016).

Phyntys of Sparta (4th century BCE): A philosopher and poet, Phyntys is known for her writings on ethics and morality, including her work *On the Moderation of Women* (Kersey n.d.).

Aesara of Lucania (4th century BCE): A philosopher from ancient Greece, Aesara wrote a treatise on ethics titled *On Human Nature*, focusing on self-control and moderation (Hundleby n.d.).

Aglaonice (4th century BCE): A philosopher and astronomer, Aglaonice was known for her expertise in predicting eclipses and was believed to possess deep knowledge of astronomy ("Aglaonice" 2024).

Diotima (5th century BCE): A crucial figure in Plato's *Symposium*, Diotima is described as a wise woman who taught Socrates about the nature of love, profoundly influencing Plato's philosophy

Annex B: Mernissi's Review of the Legacy of Islamic Queens

In *The Forgotten Queens of Islam* (1993), Fatima Mernissi explores the lives and reigns of fifteen Islamic queens, shedding light on how these women exercised power in ways that challenged traditional gender norms. In her examination of these women, she researches into the enigmatic history of figures who, despite prevailing gender biases, wielded significant political power across the Islamic world from 622 to 1989. Mernissi's approach, akin to a detective's quest, reveals the challenges of unearthing the lives of these often-overlooked figures, who remain shrouded in mystery and neglect. By meticulously researching historical texts and records, she sheds light on their contributions and invites a critical reassessment of how political power and historical significance have been gendered within Islamic contexts She writes

> Faced with the plethora of queens who in the yellowed pages of history books constantly contend with caliphs for power and with sultans for thrones, we must first of all ask the most obvious question: how does one say queen in Islam? Remember, the Koran refers to the queen of Sheba, without ever mentioning her name! Moreover, do you call queens by their given name or by that of their father or husband or son? Do they have the right to titles, and to which ones if not to the two most specific titles of power in Islam: caliph and imam? Once again words are going to reveal what over the past 15 centuries has modulated Islamic mental attitudes conscious and unconscious, at the most profound level. (Mernissi 2012, 9)

This type of categorical statement by prominent Islamic scholars such as Bernard Lewis underscores, according to Mernissi a crucial reality: Muslim women, and Arab women in particular, cannot rely on others—whether scholars or otherwise—to interpret their history for them. It is their responsibility and duty to read, re-evaluate, and reconstruct their own historical narratives. The pursuit of universal human rights and the demand for full enjoyment of these rights necessitates an active engagement with history,

enabling them to redefine and expand their understanding of the past. This task, far from being a dreary obligation, can be an enriching and fulfilling journey. Engaging with their history not only provides diversion and insight but also offers valuable perspectives on achieving personal fulfillment. Far from the negative stereotypes that portray these identities as symbols of submission and sacrifice, exploring their past can reveal empowering and joyful pathways for women who are Muslim and Arab (Mernissi 2012, 116).

In this annex, I have selected a number of queens that Mernissi explored in her work to shed light on their significant roles and the challenges they faced in exercising power within the Islamic world.

Sultana Radiyya-ruled Delhi from 1250 until her life tragically ended at the hand of a peasant. She was a capable ruler who made significant reforms during her reign. Radiyyah bint Iltutmish, as chronicled by Ibn Battuta, broke from tradition by unveiling herself and ruling as an absolute monarch for four years, dressing and behaving like a man to maintain her authority and connection with her subjects. She rode horseback like a man, armed with a bow and quiver, and did not cover her face, wrote Ibn Battuta, highlighting her bold rejection of societal norms. She led military campaigns and engaged directly with the people, showing her competence as an administrator. However, her rapid promotion of Jamal al-Din Yaqut, an Ethiopian slave was possibly her lover, aroused suspicion and led to her downfall. Her actions, including allowing Yaqut to physically assist her, were seen as violations of ethical behavior, ultimately leading to her deposition. Despite marrying Ikhtiyar al-Din Altuniyya, who had initially imprisoned her, and their attempt to retake Delhi, Radiyyah's fate was sealed. She was defeated, fled, and

her tragic end, as described by Ibn Battuta, mirrors the dramatic tales of the Arabian

Nights (Mernissi 2012, 96-97).

Queen 'Arwa Bint Ahmad al-Sulayhiyya was a significant ruler of Yemen. She wielded

power for nearly half a century, ruling from 1091 until her passing in 1138. Her reign is noted for

her authority. This included the right to have the khutba (sermon) delivered in her name, a

traditional indicator of a head of state. Along with 'Arwa, her mother-in-law Asma, who likewise

held the title of *al-sayyida al-hurra* (the noble lady who is free and independent), was renowned

for her substantial political and military influence. The use of this title symbolized her

sovereignty and autonomy.

Despite their contributions, Asma and 'Arwa are largely forgotten in modern historical

discourse, overshadowed by broader narratives and sometimes dismissed even by scholars. This

amnesia extends to both Arab and Western historians, with some even questioning the

authenticity of their rule. Bernard Lewis, for example, has claimed that there are no significant

queens in Islamic history, dismissing female rulers as anomalies.

The historical disregard for these queens may stem from the intricate socio-political

dynamics of their era, including the Sunni-Shi'ite conflicts that profoundly shaped Islamic

history. The Shi'ite context of their rule, which challenged Sunni orthodoxy, may contribute to

their obscurity. Despite this, Yemeni historians recognize Asma and 'Arwa as significant figures,

praising their governance and contributions to Yemeni history.

'Arwa, in particular, demonstrated her political acumen through military campaigns and

strategic alliances. Her reign, marked by decisive victories and political maneuvers, was crucial

for the Sulayhi dynasty's endurance. Her legacy includes not only military achievements but also

a noteworthy departure from traditional gender roles in governance.

Al-Khayzuran - originally a slave from Jurash in Yemen, rose to a position of exceptional power in Abbasid history, leveraging her roles as both a concubine and the wife of Caliph al-Mahdi in the eighth century. Her influence is notably demonstrated through her strategic management of the caliphate's succession, where she played a crucial role in securing positions of power for her sons, al-Hadi and Harun al-Rashid. As Mernissi notes, Khayzuran wielded significant political influence, shaping the Abbasid succession and governance from behind the scenes. Her power is further emphasized by her ability to navigate and assert control within a patriarchal society that confined women to limited roles. Mernissi highlights that Khayzuran's political acumen allowed her to effectively challenge and transcend the gendered constraints of her time, showcasing the substantial yet often underrecognized authority she commanded in the Abbasid caliphate (Mernissi 2012, 37-72).

Sitt al-Mulk , a notable figure of the Fatimid dynasty, exemplifies the complex interplay of power and gender in medieval Islamic politics. Born in 359/980, she rose to prominence after orchestrating the mysterious disappearance of her brother, Caliph al-Hakim in the year 1021. Her drastic action was motivated by al-Hakim's erratic and oppressive rule, including his edict forbidding women to leave their homes and his bizarre claim of divinity, which sparked outrage among the populace. Sitt al-Mulk's ascent to power reflects her exceptional talent and political acumen, a trait associated with the title "sitt," meaning "lady" or "queen" in Arabic. This title was reserved for women of notable influence and expertise, such as Sitt al-Qudat, a 14th-century expert in Hadith and religious jurisprudence. The term "sitt" underscores the significant roles women could play in the Arab Muslim world, contrasting with titles like "khatun,"

prevalent in Asian Islam and associated with Turkish and Mongol dynasties. The challenge of reconciling the societal role of women in pre-Islamic cultures with the more domestic and private roles traditionally assigned by Islamic teachings, as faced by rulers like Ghazan of the Ilkhan dynasty, highlights the diverse and evolving nature of women's influence across different Islamic traditions(Mernissi 2012 19-21).

Under the reign of al-Hakim bi Amri Allah's reign, the concept of the infallible *Imam* turned dark. His erratic rule, including harsh edicts like prohibiting women from leaving their homes and exterminating dogs, led to severe discontent. Facing her brother's increasing tyranny, Sitt al-Mulk intervened to protect the Muslim community, orchestrating his removal and assuming power to restore stability. Her decisive actions highlight her critical role during this turbulent period and her ability to address a governance crisis ((Mernissi 2012, 129).

The Fatimid dynasty provides a compelling case study of gender and political power, especially through Sitt al-Mulk. Her brief but significant rule in 1020, following her brother's disappearance, exemplifies a rare instance of a woman in a traditionally male-dominated role. Her rise was driven by al-Hakim's erratic behavior and divine claims, which caused instability. Her governance, though effective during her four months in power, was marked by the need for invisibility, as the khutba, the public sermon, was never pronounced in her name.

Navigating her role with remarkable skill, Sitt al-Mulk came from a background of Fatimid opulence and personal charisma. Despite her abilities, she operated within the constraints of her time, limiting her visibility and formal recognition. Her rule was characterized by efforts to maintain stability and address the empire's immediate needs, including economic reforms and public unrest. (Mernissi 2012, 158-176).

Mernissi also categorizes *khatun*s as women who, while not ruling in their own right, wielded significant influence as the wives or consorts of rulers.

The title "Khatun" was commonly used within the context of Asian Islam, particularly within the Turkish and Mongol ruling dynasties, as a designation for women who held pivotal roles in governance. Unlike the Arab parts of the Muslim world, where titles such as *malika, sultana*, *al-hurra*, and *sitt* were more prevalent, "Khatun" was of Soghdian origin and was primarily associated with the wives and female relatives of rulers, especially among the T'u-chiieh, Seljuks, and Khwarazms.

Turkan Khatun (Seljuk Empire) was the wife of Malikshah, the Seljuk sultan who ruled from 1072 to 1092.Following Malikshah's death, Turkan Khatun attempted to ensure the throne for her young son, Mahmud. Turkan's political maneuvering included obtaining a fatwa to allow Mahmud to reign despite his age, although she faced opposition from the Abbasid caliph al-Mugtadi, who was unwilling to allow a woman to assume power. Ultimately, her attempts were unsuccessful, reflecting the limits of female power within the Islamic caliphate's structure (Mernissi 2012, 227-28).

Among such women also, is Dokuz Khatun, the favored wife of Hulagu Khan, the grandson of Genghis Khan, who expanded his control over a large part of the Muslim empire, including Baghdad in 1258. Dokuz Khatun was a Nestorian Christian, and she influenced Hulagu's policies towards Christians, appointing them to significant positions in the empire. Her presence in political discussions was noted by contemporaries, reflecting the Mongol acceptance of women's public roles.

Kutlugh Turkan Khatun was the wife of Qutb al-Din, who ruled over Kirman after the death of her father, Barak Hajib, in 1234. Kutlugh Turkan reigned for 26 years (1257-1282),

maintaining a strong relationship with the Mongol court. Her rule was characterized by clever diplomacy, sending her son to serve in Hulagu's army and arranging the marriage of her daughter, Padishah Khatun, to Hulagu's son, Abaka Khan. Despite challenges from her stepson Suyurghatamish, she managed to retain power with support from the Mongol court. Mernissi notes, "officially confirmed in her title by Hulagu in 1264, Kutlugh Turkan bore the title of *'Isat al-dunya wa al-din*, and she had the right to have the khutba proclaimed in her name in the mosques" (Mernissi 2012, 100).

Padishah Khatun (also known as Safwat al-Din Khatun) succeeded her mother, Kutlugh Turkan, as the ruler of Kirman. Padishah was known for her beauty, poetic talent, and her ability to navigate the complex political landscape. After her husband's death, she remarried Gaykhatu, the fifth ruler of the Ilkhan dynasty, and secured the throne of Kirman as her dowry. Padishah Khatun ruled until 1295, coining money in her name and holding the title "Sovereign of the world," which emphasized her temporal power. During her reign "the Friday *khutba* was proclaimed in her name and coins were struck in her name"(Mernissi 2012, 104). Mernissi emphasizes that "the Mongols made use of alliances, and especially of daughters in-law from sovereign states, as a means of consolidating their domination…a tradition that appeared in all the dynastic family trees of these states — something inconceivable under the Abbasids, where there are never any women's names" (Mernissi 2012, 104).

Shajarat al-Durr, a distinguished ruler of Egypt, seized control in Cairo in 1250 through her military acumen, notably defeating the Crusaders and capturing King Louis IX (Mernissi 2012,14). Despite her significant achievements, including her leadership in the Mamluk dynasty and her victory at Damietta, Shajarat al-Durr faced considerable resistance. The Abbasid Caliph al-Musta'sim, who dismissed her authority with derision,

refused to recognize her as a legitimate ruler, insisting that a woman could not hold the khutba, the sermon that signified sovereignty. Her title, *Malikat al-Muslimin* (Queen of the Muslims), was a defiant gesture against the caliph's rejection. Despite her effective rule and military prowess, the political and religious opposition, compounded by internal dissent within Egypt and Syria, led to her eventual deposition (Mernissi 2012,28-30).

Shajarat al-Durr's rise to power was deeply entwined with the turbulent political landscape of the 13th century Mamluk Egypt. Her ascent followed the death of her husband, Malik al-Salih, the last Ayyubid ruler, and she initially consolidated power by issuing coins bearing her name and negotiating military victories against the Crusaders. Despite her strategic prowess, Shajarat al-Durr faced significant challenges, including the Abbasid caliph's refusal to recognize her and internal conflicts with Turan Shah, her husband's son, which led to his assassination and her subsequent deposition. Her personal life further complicated her rule; her marriage to the powerful Mamluk general Izz al-Din Aybak, driven by both political and romantic motives, ended tragically due to her jealousy and his decision to marry another. (Mernissi 2012,88-98).

In the vast realm of Islamic history, the role of queens and princesses in Indonesia reveals a captivating narrative often overlooked. Seven *sultanas* ruled in the Indies, including three in the Maldives and four in Indonesia. The earliest among them was *Sultana* Khadija, the daughter of *Sultan* Salah al-Din Salih Albendjaly, who reigned from 1347 to 1379. The famed traveler Ibn Battuta encountered her during his journey through the Maldives and was profoundly impressed by her influence and authority. In Indonesia, the state of Atjeh saw four remarkable princesses ruling successively from 1641 to 1699: *Sultana* Safiatuddin Syah, *Sultana* Tajul Alam Safiatuddin, Sultana Nur Alam, and

Sultana Ratu. These rulers highlight the significant role women played in the political landscape of the Islamic world, extending beyond the Middle East. As Mernissi notes, "Despite decrees from Mecca, opposition from the caliphs, and the opportunism of political men, 15 Muslim women sovereigns ascended the thrones of Muslim states between the thirteenth and seventeenth centuries, holding all the official insignia of sovereignty" (Mernissi 2012, 110).

Sayyida al Hurra - a Moroccan leader of Andalusian descent, sought to overcome the humiliation of defeat by turning to piracy. Her remarkable success in this field led to her becoming Hakima Tetouan, where she ruled effectively for over thirty years, from 1510 to 1542. Despite her significant role, including her leadership in the Mediterranean privateering alongside the famous Turkish corsair Barbarossa and her strategic marriage to King Ahmad al-Wattasi in 1534, she remains largely overlooked in Arab historical accounts. The Arab sources offer little detail about her, while Spanish and Portuguese records acknowledge her as a key diplomatic and military figure. Sayyida al-Hurra only gained the title of al-Hurra, indicating sovereign power, in 1515 after her husband's death. Her tenure as governor of Tetouan and her role in Mediterranean piracy exemplify her substantial influence and leadership during a tumultuous period for the Andalusian émigré community (Mernissi 2012, 18-19).

Chapter 2: On the Existence and Validity of Arab Eastern Philosophy

I find the noun anafa (disdain) may occur in both a laudatory and a blameworthy sense, but I never find either the noun partisanship or the noun extravagance occurs in any sense but a blameworthy one. Only an ignorant man, devoid of knowledge, is pleased with the epithet extravagant. Partisanship is what passes beyond the rightful only, and the disdain denounced is what goes beyond the just.

—Al- Jāḥiẓ, *The Book of Misers*

Why should we question the existence of Arab Eastern philosophy at this point of investigation? This inquiry is essential to constructing a concept of identity that arises separately and independently from the frameworks that Western philosophical canons have imposed upon the world. At the same time, this investigation marks the starting point for developing the concept of *palestinization*.

In this chapter, I explore the potential existence and validity of Arab Eastern philosophy[42] by tracing its historical roots, examining its evolution, and assessing its relevance to contemporary thought. The analysis begins by delving into the philosophical foundations of Arab thought, with particular attention to how early Arab thinkers addressed the concept of the "threatening other." Furthermore, the chapter evaluates the methodological approaches employed

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[42] Throughout this chapter, terms such as "Islamic philosophy," "Arab philosophy," and "Arab Eastern philosophy" may be used interchangeably. Regardless of the specific term employed, they all refer to the same philosophical tradition. This tradition is characterized by its integration of pre-Islamic Arab, Indian, and Persian intellectual influences with Islamic thought, shaped by the dynamic cultural and historical context of the time. The variations in terminology reflect different aspects or emphases within the broader intellectual heritage, but fundamentally, they denote the same philosophical discourse.

in this discourse, underscoring the profound influence of religious, historical, and cultural contexts on the development of Arab Eastern philosophy. Importantly, this exploration also lays the groundwork for understanding the concept of *palestinization*, which will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 3.

The analysis in this chapter draws on a number of concepts that are relevant to understanding the complex interplay of religion (mainly Islam), culture, and external cultural and philosophical influences in shaping the foundations of Arab philosophical discourse. With a view to facilitating the analysis that follows, it may be useful to define the concepts in question, which are: 'Asabiyyah, Orientalism, differentness, otherness, and societal faultlines.

- ʿAsabiyyah: A term introduced and used by Arab philosopher Ibn Khaldûn, in the fourteenth century. The term refers to group cohesion and social solidarity based on group kindred. The concept is fundamental in understanding how groups maintain internal unity and how this unity affects their rise and fall in power.

- Orientalism: A concept that was critiqued and termed by Palestinian- American thinker Edward Said. Orientalism refers to the Western portrayal of Eastern societies as exotic, backward, and monolithic. Western understandings of the Arab world, reinforcing stereotypes and marginalizing Arab intellectual contributions have been greatly shaped by Orientalism.

- Differentness: A term that is used to incorporate various forms of divergence within societies, including cultural, ethnic, or ideological differences. Differentness underlines how differences influence societal interactions, often leading to the formation of distinct social groups or identities.

- Otherness: This term is related to differentness. It refers to the perception of individuals or groups as fundamentally different from, and often inferior to, the dominant group.

- Societal Faultlines: These are the divides within societies that can be cultural, social, or political. Faultlines often arise from differentness and can manifest in tensions or conflicts between groups.

With these concepts defined, I now turn to this chapter's central question of whether one can speak of the existence of Arab philosophy and—to the extent it does—whether it can serve as a useful tool for dealing with contemporary challenges, such as those associated with the apprehension and hostility with which especially Middle Eastern immigrants, including ethnic, gender, and sexual minorities among them, are viewed in the West (See Cross Coda of Chapter 2). I will do so by first specifically examining what it is that Arab thinkers thought underlay the seemingly inevitable existence of the "threatening other."

2.1 The "Threatening Other" in Arab Philosophy

With the minoritization of migrants having inspired me to think as to what it was in social constructions that seemed to almost always lead certain groups to be viewed as "threatening others," and with my interest in looking for answers in Arab philosophy, I decided I could not do better than to begin that pursuit by an examination of Ibn Khaldûn's concept of *ʿAsabiyyah.*

In his words, *ʿAsabiyyah* is about

> … something natural among men, with the rarest exceptions. It leads to affection for one's relations and blood relatives, (the feeling that) no harm ought to befall them, nor any destruction come upon them. One feels shame when one's relatives are treated unjustly or attacked, and one wishes to intervene between them and whatever peril or destruction threatens them. (Ibn Khaldûn 2015, 98)

A towering historian and thinker of his time, Ibn Khaldûn (1332-1406) devoted considerable effort in his classic *Al Muqaddimah* (1377) to attempting to explain the rise and fall of dynasties. Toward that end, he deployed that concept— *ʿAsabiyyah*—and a societal faultline

that he presumed existed between two main groups—namely, *ḥadari* and *bedouin*, with the former belonging to fairly static political systems in urban areas and hailing from *bedouin* ancestors who lead more dynamic lives and sustained themselves by raiding other similarly constituted *bedouin* communities.

Specifically, Ibn Khaldûn theorized that, over time, *ḥadaris* would transform their lifestyles to suit the urban centers they built. Bound by *ʿAsabiyyah*—best translated as meaning a strong bond of affiliation and togetherness, or group feeling, as termed by Franz Rosenthal, who translated *Al Muqaddimah*—the *ḥadaris* labor to build dynasties and rule. However, with the passage of time, they would give in to the pleasures that came with the riches and lose the toughness and the competitive edge they wielded during their pre-*ḥadari* times.

At some point, ever on the look-out for an opening to conquer and seize power, *bedouins* begin to encroach onto *ḥadari* urban centers, and, bound by an *ʿAsabiyyah* of their own, they take advantage of the *ḥadaris'* weaker ways and waning *ʿAsabiyyah*, and they ultimately take over and become the rulers themselves. And, thus, according to Ibn Khaldûn, the cycle goes in what might be characterized as a succession of cyclical revolutions that seem to perpetually bring once-outsiders to the helm at the expense of insiders.

There is a lot to unpack when it comes to Ibn Khaldûn's view of how the wheel of history turns. But *ʿAsabiyyah* is central to his thinking. The *ʿAsabiyyah* binds people together as they ascend to the helm, and it does the same when they honker down to defend against the encroachment by outsiders, but only to ultimately lose to them not because their *ʿAsabiyyah* ceases to exist, but because its strength and effectiveness wane as a result of their own weakness. No matter, the mere existence of *ʿAsabiyyah* makes anyone who is not a part of it an "other," and

if that "other" happens to be an outsider who is up to no good, that surely makes the outsider a "threatening other."

There is another dimension to Ibn Khaldûn's worldview of history that is interesting in the context of trying to understand the forces that underlie what appears to be a reflexive proclivity on the part of insiders for viewing outsiders as the "other," even if one were to abstract from the insecurity evoked by the outsiders' hostile takeover designs. To be sure, Ibn Khaldûn did not view *bedouins* as inherently inferior to *ḥadaris*. After all, to him, *ḥadaris* hail from *bedouin* ancestries. Also, he exalted the virtues of the vitality of *bedouins* and the strength and effectiveness of their *ʿAsabiyyah*. But he did consider *ḥadara* (civilization) as a product of a natural progression of history. Even without the *bedouins'* hostile takeover intent, the dual existence of two *ʿAsabiyyahs* during the encroachment phase brings with it a sense of civilizational or cultural differentness between the two communities. Thus, Ibn Khaldûn considers that the perception of "others" as culturally different or distinct can arise simply from the coexistence of two strong group identities with different historical backgrounds and evolutionary paths. This cultural differentness can further contribute to the formation of distinct social boundaries and the reinforcement of the notion of "us" versus "others," even in the absence of immediate threats or hostilities.

In contemporary contexts, the dynamics of migration can be compared to these historical observations. The perception of migrants from different cultural backgrounds as a "threatening other" is often rooted in the same sense of civilizational or cultural differentness that Ibn Khaldûn described. The distinction made between various migrant groups, such as the different reactions in the West to Syrian versus Ukrainian migrants, highlights how perceived cultural differences influence the view of outsiders as

threatening. Edward Said's observation on the complications introduced by culturally distinct groups supports this understanding.

> My concern here is more with the largely unaccommodated exiles, like Palestinians or the new Muslim immigrants in continental Europe, or the West Indian and African Blacks in England, whose presence complicates the presumed homogeneity of the new societies in which they live.(Said 1994, 50)

It is arguably the case that, apart from the sense of differentness rooted in differences in ethnicity and faith backgrounds, the perception of civilizational differentness underlies much of the apprehension with which outsiders are viewed as the "other" to be apprehensive about, or even fearful of. Be that as it may, Ibn Khaldûn has indelibly sketched a portrait in which the mere existence of *ʿAsabiyyah* creates an "otherness" faultline in societies, with insiders on one side of that faultline and outsiders on the other, and with cultural differentness, both real and perceived, accounting for much of the dread with which the outsiders are viewed.

It would, of course, be a stretch to liken modern-day West-bound migration from the East to the *bedouin* raids on *ḥadari* settlements as depicted by Ibn Khaldûn. After all, it is hard to imagine how anyone in the West could have been genuinely fearful of an imminent takeover by, for example, the Syrian migrants fleeing the ravages of war in their own country. Nor could migrants fleeing for lesser, but still serious, hardships, like abject poverty, state tyranny, or persecution, have been plausibly perceived as harboring designs of taking over power in the West.[43]

I would argue, however, that it was the civilizational or cultural differentness migrants from the East were seen as infiltrating the West with that, in the main, caused them to be viewed

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[43] Unlike migrations of the 18th and 19th centuries which were predominantly Western to Eastern migrations, most modern migrations are not propelled by a desire for conquest or domination but by a pursuit of safety, stability, and better lives.

as threatening outsiders, or the threatening "other." The fact that the influx of millions of Ukrainians into the West in the aftermath of the Russian invasion in 2022 did not trigger the kind of paranoia that the smaller influx of Syrian refugees did only a few years earlier would, in my view, lend support to this argument.[44]

While significant, cultural differentness, or the perception thereof, is not the only explanation that one can find in Arab philosophy for the seemingly inevitable existence of "the threatening other." It would certainly seem to be a logical explanation when it comes to attempting to understand the tension between insiders and outsiders. But, what about other forms or manifestations of certain individuals or groups being viewed as an "other"? To be sure, important insights can be gleaned from the contributions of Arab philosophers of the Muslim Golden Era, as well as more contemporary Arab philosophers. The remainder of this chapter is devoted to a consideration of the more notable of such contributions. Toward that end, and as a key point of departure, I address in section 2.2 below how the question of *differentness* in general, and not only the cultural dimension of it, was dealt with by Arab philosophers.

2.2 Differentness in Arab Philosophy

Arab and Muslim philosophers of the Muslim Golden Era had struggled to reconcile the teachings of *Islam* with the precepts of rigorous rationality. Ever so careful to avoid even the slightest of suggestion that they were non-believers, they engaged in intellectual pursuits that brought the best out of them, and *Beit Al-Ḥikmah* (House of Wisdom)—originally founded as a library by the Abbasid Caliph Harūn Al-Rashid, whose reign extended from 786 to 809 CE—

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[44] Evidence on this can be found most recently in the position taken by the ruling party in Poland ahead of elections against migrants in general, however, the real target are migrants from the Middle East. https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/poland-election-campaign-polarised-by-anxiety-over-migration-2023-10-06/. See also Cross Coda.

evolved, particularly under the rule of his son, Al-Ma'mun, into an academy where scholars

congregated and engaged in a highly consequential scholarship.[45] In the process, they

championed, and benefitted from, a translation revolution that led to translating into Arabic

major Greek, Indian, and Persian works, and they significantly advanced the state of knowledge

in a variety of disciplines, including medicine, astronomy, natural sciences, mathematics, and

philosophy.[46]

Until its destruction at the hands of the Mongols in 1258,[47] *Beit Al-Ḥikmah* served as a

hithertofore unprecedented hub for the preservation, as well as dissemination, reproduction, and

extension of the knowledge heritage of earlier civilizations, and it did so not only on the strength

of the translation revolution it housed and promoted, but also by being home to thinkers and

scholars who were not exclusively Arabs or Muslims. However, with *Islam* playing such a

dominant role in shaping the contours of intellectual discourse at the time, Arab and Muslim

scholars, in particular, had to invest heavily in finding ways in which articles of faith could

withstand the rigors of deductive reasoning and rationality. In no realm of inquiry was that

challenge more formidable than it was in philosophy. As I noted earlier, that challenge brought

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[45] Al-Jāḥiẓ was at the forefront of the knowledge revolution during the Abbasid era, particularly under the reign of al-Ma'mun, when intellectual debates flourished and scholars thrived in disciplines like Kalam. His insatiable love for books led to the legendary tale that he died after being crushed by a pile of books while reading in solitude at a bookshop (Montgomery 2013, 5). However, with the rise of al-Mutawakkil, who forbade public debate on the Qur'an, Kalam was suppressed. Despite this, al-Jāḥiẓ, who had devoted his life to its practice and codification, considered the structure of knowledge to be a series of steps in a Kalam debate, with psychic tranquility as the ultimate prize. He viewed the salvation of his soul and fellow Muslims as dependent on fulfilling God's will through this intellectual path (Montgomery 2013, 38). See James E. Montgomery, 2013. *Al-Jāḥiẓ: In Praise of Books*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

[46] Marina Sohma, "The House of Wisdom: One of the Greatest Libraries in History," Ancient Origins, updated January 1, 2017, https://www.ancient-origins.net/ancient-places-asia/house-wisdom-one-greatest-libraries-history-007292.

[47] The sack of Baghdad in 1258 led to the destruction of the House of Wisdom and the massacre of the city's inhabitants.
See Jay Hemmings, "The Sack of Baghdad in 1258 – One of the Bloodiest Days in Human History," War History Online, February 15, 2019, https://www.warhistoryonline.com/medieval/the-sack-of-baghdad-in-1258.html.

the best out of them, particularly when the matter of inquiry was governed by explicit and categorical provisions in the *Qur'ân*. The essence of that intellectual predicament is captured best by Seyyed Hossein Nasr who identifies two ways by which Arab philosophers dealt with it—namely, "the first challenged the unbridled use of *'aql* (mind) and sought to make it subservient to the revelation, and the second, especially in its more sapiential aspects, sought to illuminate the mind with the help of the light of God… for the attainment of supreme knowledge" (Nasr 2006, 135).

For the purposes of this thesis, given my interest in understanding how and why *differentness*, or the perception thereof, can lead to the formation of societal faultlines, I set out to find out what it was that the Arab and Muslim philosophers of the Muslim Golden Era had to say by way of interpreting an oft-recited *Qur'ânic* verse from *Surat Al-Ḥujurāt* (49:13)—namely, "O people, indeed We created you from male and female and made you into nations and tribes so that you may know one another. Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight of *Allah* is the most pious of you. Indeed, *Allah* is Knowing and Acquainted."

Toward that end, with the earliest Arab and Muslim engagement in philosophical discourse traceable to *Al-Mu'tazilah*[48]—a theological movement that started in the first half of the eighth century CE—I set out to understand what it was that key figures in that movement had to say about the essence of human nature. Of particular interest to me was the question that the

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[48] "The Mu'tazilites were the first group of Muslim thinkers to apply rational arguments systematically to various questions of religion and also to natural philosophy. They, moreover, knew some of the tenets of Greek thought, which was being translated into Arabic at the time of the peak of their intellectual activity in Baghdad in the ninth century and had a share in the introduction of Hellenic and Hellenistic thought into the Islamic intellectual world. Most of the Mu'tazilites devoted themselves to purely theological and politico- theological questions, and all were concerned with ethics. They in fact developed a "rational ethics," for which they became well known in later Islamic history." Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Islamic Philosophy from Its Origin to the Present* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2006), 123.

verse cited here raises as to whether God saw *differentness* as a key factor underlying the existence of an innate human desire to cooperate, or a cause for competition and rivalries in spite of which people had to learn to cooperatively coexist. In my view, albeit superficial, the first possibility springs out of a literal reading of the verse, while the second would appear to be the likely intent if the verse were read as an enjoinder for people to cooperate with each other despite their differentness.

When considering the major issues *Al-Mu'tazilah* school of thought was preoccupied with, it would appear, at first glance, that the question of *differentness* and whether it may inspire a desire to cooperate or trigger an instinct to compete, would not be germane to any of them. An examination of the key tenets of that school of thought would, however, suggest otherwise.

Specifically, influenced by Greek philosophical reasoning, *Al-Mu'tazilah* thinkers settled on a worldview that was defined by three key tenets.[49] The first was the oneness of God, from which they reasoned that the *Qur'ân* had to be created (meaning it being new and not coeternal with God). The second was the justness of God, based on which they asserted that, rather than determined by God, people choose by their free will between good and evil, which ultimately makes them responsible for their own actions. Accordingly, and this was *Al-Mu'tazilah's* third tenet, divine accountability in the form of the promise of heaven for good deeds and the threat of hell for bad ones was logical and just.

The second of these three tenets was where I thought I should look for *Al-Mu'tazilah's* views on the essence of human nature. That tenet was, and it remains, clear on the choice

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[49] To the three tenets mentioned here, some scholars add another two namely—the promise and the threat—(*al-wa'd wa 'l-wa'id),* and —in-between position in relation to a Muslim who commits a sin— (*al-manzilah bayn al-manzilatayn*). See, for Nasr, *Islamic Philosophy from Origin to the Present,* 122.

between good and evil being a matter of free will. But it was silent on what goes into

determining that choice. Put differently, it did not directly address the question of whether an

individual was prone to choose one or the other. This does not mean that *Al-Mu'tazilah*

theologians did not struggle with that question. To be sure, they did, as evidenced by the fact that

they struggled to reconcile their notion of free will with a plethora of *Qur'ânic* verses that were

unambiguous on God having created people with a disposition to choose evil unless they

willfully and actively engaged in restraining themselves.

Beginning with verse 19, several *Qur'ânic* verses in *Surat Al-Ma'arij* (70:19-22) amply

illustrate this point. In part, they read "Indeed Humankind was created anxious: When touched

by evil, worried; and when touched by good, disposed to hoard and not share, except those who

observe and keep prayers; and those to a portion of their wealth the deprived and underprivileged

are entitled; and those who believe in the Day of Reckoning; and those who fear their Lord's

punishment."

Similarly, verse 53 in *Surat Yusuf* (12:53) reads: "The soul is a persistent enjoiner of evil,

except those upon which my Lord has mercy." Also, verse 28 in *Surat An-Nisā* (4:28) reads:

"mankind was created weak."

In the way the moral shortcomings of the humankind are described in these verses, as

indeed in many other *Qur'ânic* verses, there appears to be the presumption that people were

created wired up with these weaknesses. There is always, however, an exception to what is

projected as a general rule in *Qur'ân*. And, much in the spirit of the qualifications that provide

the basis for the exception to the general rule, which, again, is the presumption of moral

weakness, moral fortitude is projected throughout *Qur'ân* as deriving from faith in God and

compliance with the associated requirements of righteousness, piety, and observance of rituals.

This *Qur'ānic* projection of the essence of the human nature appears to have been sidestepped by *al-Mu'tazilah* thinkers, because it may have been viewed, however superficially, as being not necessarily inconsistent with their free will tenet. After all, that tenet posits is that, by their free will, people choose between good and evil; hence, they are accountable for the choices they make, and God is just for administering that accountability in the form of the promise of paradise for good deeds and threat of punishment in hell for bad ones. But how is that not a problem in the face of explicit *Qur'ānic* text that considers humankind to be naturally disposed to choosing evil over good, and to do otherwise only if people are restrained by what comes with being believers in God? Put differently, how is the presumed justness of God consistent with holding humans responsible for deeds that are motivated by a preordained disposition?[50]

Even if one were to argue that the choice people really have to make between good and evil is essentially a second-order choice problem, in the sense of it being determined by the more fundamental choice between faith and nonfaith, that still would not resolve the problem. This is so because, rather than a choice people make out of their own free will, believing in God is willed by God himself (Nasr 2006, 121-124).

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[50] This tension within *Mu'tazilite* thought is well illustrated by two schools: the *Wasiliyyah* and the *Jāḥiẓites*, as documented by al-Shahrastani in his book *Kitab al-Milal wa al-Nihal* (The Book of Sects and Creeds). The *Wasiliyyah*, named after Wasil ibn Ata (700-748 CE), a prominent Mu'tazilite thinker and student of al-Hasan al-Basri, emphasized four key principles: (1) the denial of the Divine attributes, arguing that attributes like knowledge and power should be reduced to God's essence; (2) the doctrine of predestination, which held that humans are the creators of their own actions and God cannot be associated with evil or injustice; (3) the doctrine of intermediate status, which proposed that a sinner is neither a believer nor an unbeliever; and (4) their critical stance on early Islamic battles, where they refrained from declaring either party as entirely righteous or sinful (Shahrastani 1993 v.1, 59-63). The *Jāḥiẓites,* followers of Amr ibn Bahr al-Jāḥiẓ (776-868 CE), were distinguished by their integration of philosophical ideas into *Mu'tazilite* doctrine. They argued, for instance, that knowledge is necessary by nature, and that human actions are determined by natural properties rather than will. Additionally, they believed that the people of Hell would not suffer eternal torment but would become part of the fire's nature, a view aligned more with naturalistic philosophy than with traditional Islamic theology. See Abu al-Fath Muhammad al-Shahrastani, *Kitab al-Milal wa al-Nihal* (The Book of Sects and Creeds), ed. and trans. W. Cureton, 2 vols. (London: British Library, 1846), 59-63, 87-89.

For an illustration of this predicament, one need not look further than verse 31 *Surat al-Muddather* (74:31), which says: "God also wills some to find the right path and others the wrong path; had He wanted, He would have made you into one people; rather His will determines who finds the wrong path and who finds the right path, and you will be held accountable for your deeds."

While this verse presented an obvious challenge to *al-Mu'tazilah's* free-will tenet, those among them who subscribed to the divine determinism doctrine could not possibly have had an easy time with its contrarian implications for the core belief in the justness of God. Indeed, neither side dealt satisfactorily with this predicament, with some of *al-Mu'tazilah* thinkers essentially sidestepping it and the believers in determinism among them deploying a definitional workaround which essentially held that God was just because He only desired good things for people.[51]

This predicament extended well into the philosophy of the Muslim Golden Era, as Muslim and Arab philosophers continued to struggle in a seemingly endless pursuit of reconciling the precepts of rationality with *Qur'ânic* text, with the fear of opening themselves to charges of blasphemy always strictly restraining their room for intellectual

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[51] In his *Kitāb al-Milal wa al-Nihal* (*The Book of Sects and Creeds)* (1127-1128) al-Shahrastani (1068-1153) provides a comprehensive definition of the Mu'tazilite doctrine, which underscores their views on divine justice and predestination. Al-Shahrastani describes the Mu'tazilites as the "People of Justice and Monotheism," emphasizing their belief in God's inherent justice and the moral integrity of His commands. They maintained that God's actions are just and good, upholding a balance between divine determinism and human free will. The Mu'tazilites denied the existence of eternal attributes in God, viewing attributes like knowledge and power as inherent to His essence rather than independent qualities. They held that the Qur'ān is created and rejected the possibility of seeing God in the Hereafter. The Mu'tazilites asserted that moral obligations, such as recognizing good and evil, are knowable through reason and obligatory even before the prophetic message. They also considered leadership in the Muslim community (Imamate) as a matter of choice and discretion. Shahrastani, *Kitab al-Milal wa al-Nihal*, vol. 1, 56-59.
*French translation by Gimaret, Monnot, and Jolivet was sponsored by UNESCO: *Livre des religions et des sectes*, Leuven: Peeters, vol. I, 1986, vol. II, 1993.

maneuver. But, whether at least, some were merely heretical, as they were often labeled, or even closet non-believers, they all treated *Qur'ânic* text as unassailable.

This point of tension for in *al Mu'tazilah* thinkers, in particular, but also for Muslim philosophers, in general, was aptly captured by Hussein Muruwwa when he sums up his cogent analysis of the Mutazilite movement as follows:

> The fact of the matter is that the Mu'tazilah never truly deviated from Islamic metaphysics. What they did, with much courage, diligence, honesty, and intellectual openness, was to elevate the status of humanity above mere "objecthood" and pure existence, placing human reason at the highest level their philosophical and social awareness could reach within the historical development of their society and era. However, the problem the Mu'tazilah faced was that their attempt was closely tied to a strict adherence to Islamic metaphysics as a whole, without compromising any of the foundational beliefs upon which it was based. They were not very successful in finding a convincing connection between their metaphysical stance and their rational and often realistic approach. As a result, they encountered various internal logical inconsistencies in some of their important topics. Nevertheless, this was a natural and inevitable consequence given the circumstances of their movement. (Muruwwa 2008, v2, 321)

Thus, none of al *Mu'tazilah* thinkers came close to even questioning the *Qur'ânic* stipulation that people were created with *differentness* inculcated in them, with all, except those shielded by their belief in God, disposed to choosing evil over good.

Of the moral weaknesses of humankind that *Qur'ân* (70:21) was explicit on, the proclivity to hoard is of key importance to the inquiry in this section about the existence of the threatening "other." Thus, in addition to being created *different,* people are inculcated with selfishness, which makes *differentness* a natural source of moral weakness. Societal faultlines tend to emerge out of these weaknesses, with one on one side of a faultline and others on the other; with the "one" being an individual, a family, a tribe, or even a whole nation; and with the *differentness*, or the perception thereof, being associated with a physical trait or behavioral and/or cultural disposition.

In this worldview, if people are not restrained by religious teachings or social norms codified in laws, societal faultlines tend to emerge and almost always lead to "the other" being viewed with apprehension, hostility, or even fear. Thus, rivalry, rather than cooperation, is a natural human tendency, while cooperation has to be willed by, or forced on, people as a result of a perception of a common threat or a greater good for all. Hence, as Said points out: "the fundamental problem is, therefore, how to reconcile one's identity and the actualities of one's own culture, society, and history to the reality of other identities, cultures, peoples" (Said 1994, 94).

The *Qur'ânic* enjoinder for people to know one another, and to coexist harmoniously, despite their differences (49:13), is certainly not unique to *Islam*. Indeed, the state of oneness (in the sense of interconnectedness and togetherness), the attainment of which was projected as the highest good in Islamist *Sūfism,* was deeply rooted in earlier religions and traditions, including Christianity, Buddhism, Daoism, and Confucianism.[52] But, in none of these religions and traditions was togetherness projected as a natural human tendency; rather, it was considered as an aspiration of the highest order that people needed to will for and strive to attain.

Even though the analysis here draws heavily on religion for answers to the question of what leads to the emergence and persistence of societal faultlines that give rise to the existence of an "other" that is viewed at least with apprehension, that is because religion, especially *Islam*, played a dominant role in shaping and constraining the thought processes and contributions of

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[52] In Christianity, spiritual attainment is linked to union with God, while in Buddhism, it is the attainment of Nirvana. In Daoism, spiritual attainment is linked to harmony with the Dao, the fundamental principle underlying the universe .Confucianism focuses on moral and ethical development as a form of spiritual attainment. Achieving virtue, practicing benevolence, and fulfilling social responsibilities are central to Confucian notions of spiritual growth

early Muslim and Arab philosophers.[53] But the main conclusion of the analysis—namely, that people are naturally disposed to behave selfishly rather than cooperatively, appears to be a valid view of the essence of human nature.

It is not surprising, therefore, that nations of modern times actively sought to enshrine such organizing principles as equality, nondiscrimination, and cooperation in their constitutions. Why otherwise would they bother if such principles were presumed to flow naturally from the way people are configured? And, it is noteworthy that, as with religious texts and teachings, constitutions are framed in terms of what ought to be, not in terms of what is. Throughout constitutions and other legal codes, cooperation is projected as a necessity for the greater good, with some thinkers—Ibn Khaldûn and may others—viewing it as necessary for the preservation of the human race.

The foregoing analysis clearly suggests that it is *differentness*, or the perception thereof, that inevitably underlies the emergence of a sense of otherness. And, for that to be the case, the Islamic presumption of the existence of an innate proclivity for choosing evil over good is a tangential issue. But, it is an issue that I sought to highlight in order to demonstrate the profound impact it had on the early evolution of Arab and Muslim philosophical discourse, and to even suggest that not only did Arab Eastern philosophy exist, but it also was distinct in the sense of its early pioneers having to deal with such a central philosophical question as the essence of human nature under intellectual constraints the like of which earlier philosophical traditions did not have to contend with.

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[53] The Qur'ān played a pivotal role in the philosophical discourse of the Muslim Golden Era, serving as both a central text and a critical point of reference in intellectual debates. Islamic philosophers, grappling with the integration of rationality and faith, frequently used Qur'ānic verses to substantiate their philosophical positions and resolve doctrinal conflicts. The engagement with the Qur'ān was not merely a matter of adherence but a profound attempt to harmonize theological principles with rational inquiry. As a result, the Qur'ān's teachings were integral to the philosophical arguments and were often employed as authoritative evidence in the discussions on metaphysics, ethics, and human nature. This interplay underscores the central role of the *Qur'ān* in shaping and directing the course of Islamic philosophical thought.

That societal faultlines emanating from *differentness* tend to lead to the emergence of *otherness* is clear. This may beg the question as to the roots of *differentness*. The answer may well lie in the tendency on the part of human beings to congregate around identity lines. As stated by Said, "All of us without exception belong to some sort of national, religious or ethnic community: no one, no matter the volume of protestations, is above the organic ties that bind the individual to family, community, and of course nationality" (Said 1994,40). This is akin to Ibn Khaldûn's ʿ*Asabiyyah.*

But, is it always the case that the "other" is an "other" to be insecure about? That would seem to be the general rule. However, as will be made clear in section 2.5 below, there were times when, if only transitionally, the outsider "other" was an "other" to be emulated, rather than feared or resisted. But, before getting into that, it may be useful to consider contributions of philosophers of the Muslim Golden Era, with a view to answering the question of whether one can accurately speak of the existence of an Arab Eastern philosophy that was distinct from non-Eastern philosophy, or unalloyed with its influences.

2.3 Did Arab Eastern Philosophy Stand as a Distinct School of Thought in Philosophical Discourse in the Muslim Golden Era?

A primary focus of the foregoing analysis was on whether one could find in the works of Arab and Muslim thinkers of the Muslim Golden Era a framework within which the ubiquity of an "otherness" societal faultline could be plausibly explained. Even without the benefit of considering the full range of their intellectual pursuits, the direct bearing this inquiry had on such a central issue of philosophical discourse as the essence of human nature, the questions these thinkers raised and grappled with, as well as the methods they deployed, should leave no room

for doubt about the emergence and existence of Arab Eastern philosophy during the era in question. But apparently, that was not enough for Straussian thinkers who, in my view, wrongly argued that Arab philosophy in that era was

> just a mere difficult writing worth understanding and exploring the writer not the intellectual argument… since (according to them) Islamic philosophy is basically a vain attempt at reconciling religion with Greek philosophy, and then disguising the other's genuine view that the latter is a better guide to the truth than the former, the arguments are not going to be very interesting. (Leaman 1996, 1145)

Nevertheless, to assert, as I do here, that Arab Eastern philosophy existed and that it was distinct, does not mean that it was not influenced by the philosophical discourse of earlier civilizations. Indeed, there is ample evidence that suggests otherwise, as Arab Eastern philosophy represented a remarkable synthesis of ancient Greek, Muslim Arab, Persian, and Indian philosophical traditions, and at the center of that intellectual mosaic lay the influence of Greek philosophy, particularly the foundational works of Plato and Aristotle (4th-5th century BCE). Arab thinkers of the Muslim Golden Era recognized the value of that philosophy and, through extensive translation and interpretation projects, they managed to integrate it into Islamic thought. In the course of that process, a lot did transpire as to how they, as well as Muslim thinkers of that era in general, perceived, and engaged with, other cultures and religions.

Al-Shahrastani's *al-Milal wa al-Nihal* is particularly illustrative of this. In his work, al-Shahrastani demonstrates a meticulous and methodical approach to documenting the beliefs of various religious sects, showing an effort to understand them on their own terms. His declaration that "I have made it my duty to present the views of each sect as they appear in their books, without bias for them or against them,"[54] underscores a commitment to an objective

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[54] Al-Shahrastani details the contributions of key figures in Islamic philosophy who integrated Greek thought into the Islamic intellectual tradition. Al-Kindi (c. 801–873), known as the "Philosopher of the Arabs," translated and commented on Aristotle's works and produced over 300 writings in medicine, music, and astronomy.

understanding of "the other." Al-Shahrastani's work is significant not only for its encyclopedic scope but also for its methodological rigor, which challenges the notion that Islamic philosophy was solely inspired by a diminutive view of other religions and cultures. His approach provides a clear counterpoint to the argument that Islamic philosophers were merely concerned with defending their own beliefs against external influences.

Moreover, with "knowledge" being central to philosophical discourse, there is, as noted by Franz Rosenthal in *Triumphant Knowledge* (2007), a remarkable transformation that occurred in the state of knowledge in Arabia with the advent of *Islam*, with that transformation bringing about an improved reflection of reality. Such was the transformation that occurred in Arabia "when Muhammad came and forged the concept into the basic tool and objective of divine revelation, thus setting the stage for that reverence for knowledge which was to become the main theme of Islamic civilization" (Rozenthal 2007,18).

In his *Muslim Perceptions of Other Religions— A Historical Survey* (1999), Jacques Waardenburg underscores the scholarly interest in cross-cultural perceptions, with a particular focus on Muslim views of other cultures and religions. He notes that Muslims were in continuous

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Hunayn ibn Ishaq (808–873), a physician and translator, played a central role in the Abbasid translation movement, rendering Greek texts into Arabic. Yahya ibn Adi (893–974), a logician and student of al-Farabi, made significant contributions to ethics and metaphysics. Al-Farabi (c. 872–950), called the "Second Teacher" after Aristotle, had a lasting influence on logic, political philosophy, and metaphysics in Islamic thought. Ibn Sina (c. 980–1037), renowned for synthesizing Aristotelian philosophy with Islamic thought, produced *The Book of Healing*, his magnum opus. As al-Shahrastani notes, these scholars not only preserved and transmitted Greek philosophy but expanded upon it, enriching the intellectual landscape of the Islamic Golden Age. See Abu al-Fath Muhammad al-Shahrastani, *Kitab al-Milal wa al-Nihal* (The Book of Sects and Creeds), ed. W. Cureton, vol. 1 (London: British Library, 1846), 487–490.

Al-Shahrastani introduces his *Kitab al-Milal wa al-Nihal* as a study of religions, sects, and philosophical schools of thought, presenting it as a comprehensive reference in its field. It functions as an encyclopedia of religious and philosophical viewpoints and has been highly praised by scholars. Ibn al-Subki lauds it as "the best book written on this subject." English scholar Alfred Guillaume calls it "comprehensive and indispensable," particularly for its categorization of sects and their distinctive features. German scholar Huberker notes its crucial role in bridging the gap between ancient and modern philosophical traditions. See the editor's introduction to al-Shahrastani, *Kitab al-Milal wa al-Nihal*, ed. W. Cureton, vol. 1 (London: British Library, 1846), 11–15.

contact with various religions due to the vast presence and reach of the Muslim civilization, leading to a dynamic exchange of ideas and beliefs (Waardenburg 1999, xi-xii).

Waardenburg observes that, in many cases, Muslim scholars drew parallels between groups of non-Muslims and Muslim heretics, treating heretical opinions as influences from outside, thereby further emphasizing the normative and evaluative character of Muslim judgments of religions other than *Islam*. The names and classifications given to non-Muslim religions, such as Ṣābi (Ṣābians),[55] Barāhima (Brahmins),[56] and Majus (Zoroastrians),[57] were not

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[55] Al-Shahrastani portrays the Ṣābians as adherents to a doctrine emphasizing acquisition as a means of spiritual attainment. They believe that the ultimate goal is to approach and understand the divine creator through intermediaries of spiritual beings, rather than through direct experience or innate nature. According to Shahrastani, the Ṣābians view spiritual entities as pure, luminous essences, transcending material substance and physical attributes, free from the imperfections of bodily existence. This doctrine suggests that true purity and sanctity are achieved by distancing oneself from material impurities and aligning with the spiritual realm. This contrasts with groups like the Hanafis, who focus on innate nature. For the Ṣābians, the path to divine proximity involves transcending material reality and engaging with sacred intermediaries. See al-Shahrastani, *Kitab al-Milal wa al-Nihal*, vol. 2 (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, 1993), 307–311.

The Ṣābians, a term mentioned in the Qur'ān, have been the subject of historical debate and interpretation. Early Islamic interpretations associated them with a pre-Islamic monotheistic sect or potentially with groups like the Mandaeans, who practiced distinctive religious rituals, including baptism. In later periods, the term Ṣābian was applied to the Harranian Ṣābians of Türkiye's Harran region, who practiced a syncretic faith blending elements from various ancient traditions. See *Elukin, Jonathan. "The Discovery of the Ṣābians of Harran."* Harvard Theological Review 94, no. 3 (2001): 320–39.

[56] Al-Shahrastani discusses the Brahmins as part of his examination of various Indian religious sects. He explains that the Brahmins, a significant group in Hinduism, reject prophethood entirely. According to Shahrastani, the Brahmins argue that if a prophet's message is rational, it is redundant, as reason alone suffices for understanding divine truths. Conversely, if the message is irrational, it is unacceptable because it contradicts human intelligence. The Brahmins also reject the idea that divine worship could involve practices deemed irrational, such as pilgrimage rituals and dietary restrictions, arguing that such practices conflict with rational thought. Shahrastani further notes that the Brahmins are divided into different factions, including those focused on metaphysical concepts, reincarnation, and other diverse beliefs. This analysis underscores their unique position in contrast to other Indian philosophical schools and their distinct approach to spirituality and rationality. See al-Shahrastani, *Kitab al-Milal wa al-Nihal*, vol. 2 (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, 1993), 601–603.

The belief system of Brahmanism, originating during the Late Vedic Period (1100–500 BCE) in the Indus Valley Civilization after the Indo-Aryan Migration (2000–1500 BCE), is rooted in the Vedas. It asserts Brahman as the supreme being and influenced the development of Hinduism. See Joshua J. Mark, "Brahmanism," *World History Encyclopedia*, last modified February 10, 2021, https://www.worldhistory.org/Brahmanism/.

[57] In *Kitab al-Milal wa al-Nihal*, al-Shahrastani addresses the Magi (Zoroastrians), highlighting their theological claims and internal disagreements. He notes that the Magi posited that the two fundamental principles of their religion—light and darkness—could not both be eternal. Instead, they believed light to be eternal and darkness to be a creation. There was debate among them regarding the cause of the emergence of darkness: whether it originated from light, which cannot produce partial evil, or from another source, with no entity sharing the creation

mere labels but rather reflected the Islamic perspective on those religions. They were used as predicates in theological discussions (*kalām*) and Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*), shaping the way Muslims perceived and engaged with other belief systems (Waardenburg 1999,18-50).

As Waardenburg's analysis progresses, he points out that such Muslim judgments of other religions were influenced by historical context, political factors, and social structures. The limited and often tense contacts between Muslims and non-Muslims in medieval societies led to relatively fixed and ethnocentric images of other religions. Thus, he maintains, there was little incentive for Muslims to explore or understand other religious beliefs beyond the apologetic framework that was established to defend *Islam* and maintain religious and cultural foundations (Waardenburg 1999, 3-17).

To be sure, such an understanding of Muslim judgments on other religions was evident in the philosophical discourse of the Muslim Golden Era. But, that is not to say that Waardenburg's analysis necessarily establishes that the interest in philosophy on the part of the philosophers of that era was solely, or even mainly, inspired by a diminutive view of other religions and cultures. Indeed, as an overview of other thinkers of the Muslim Golden Era illustrates, a more nuanced assessment of the factors underlying Muslim thinkers' interest in philosophy is warranted.

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and eternity of light. Al-Shahrastani critiques this inconsistency, illustrating the confusion within Magian thought. Additionally, he mentions that the Magi considered Kayumarth or Zurvan the Great as the first principle, with Zoroaster as the second prophet. Some Magian traditions equate Kayumarth with Adam, interpreting Kayumarth as "the speaking living one," though this interpretation differs from other historical accounts. See al-Shahrastani, *Kitab al-Milal wa al-Nihal*, vol. 2 (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, 1993), 278.

Additionally, the Zoroastrians (referred to as Zadastians) are explored in the context of Islamic thought and religious classification. Al-Shahrastani situates Zoroastrianism within the historical and theological milieu of pre-Islamic religions, noting its prominence during the Sassanian Empire, which significantly influenced the early Muslim period. He contrasts the dualistic nature of Zoroastrianism—characterized by the belief in two opposing deities, Ahura Mazda and Angra Mainyu—with the monotheistic tenets of Islam. Al-Shahrastani includes Zoroastrians in the category of "People of the Book" (Ahl al-Kitab) in certain historical contexts due to their ancient scriptures, which allowed them certain legal and social accommodations under Islamic rule. Furthermore, the interactions between Zoroastrian and early Islamic thought are discussed, highlighting mutual influences and the role of Zoroastrian scholars within the Islamic intellectual tradition. See al-Shahrastani, *Kitab al-Milal wa al-Nihal*, vol. 2 (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, 1992), 281–285.

It is indeed quite interesting that, centuries later, similar lines of reasoning, as well as comparable arguments and counterarguments, were deployed in support of similarly divergent views on the extent to which Arab philosophers of the 19th and 20th centuries were influenced by Western philosophy. As discussed in the penultimate section 2.5 below, Arab philosophers' disposition toward Colonialism and Orientalism played a key role in shaping their overall perspective on the "other" that was the West. As a prelude to that discussion, it may be instructive to provide an overview of the historical, intellectual, and cultural underpinnings of Orientalism.

2.4 Orientalism

Orientalism, as a scholarly and cultural discourse, has long influenced Western understandings of the Arab world. Emerging prominently in the 19th century, this framework presented the East as a monolithic and exotic "other," often reinforcing stereotypes and misconceptions. To grasp the full impact of Orientalism, this section provides an overview of its origins, key proponents, and the ways in which it has shaped Western intellectual attitudes towards Arab philosophy.

The initial nucleus of the Orientalism, in its cultural manifestation, is interlinked with the political and military aspects of the orientalist movement, which also had their origins in the early Crusades. However, the connection between Arab-Islamic culture and Western European culture had already been established prior to the Crusades during the Arab-Byzantine wars and during the period of Arab presence in regions like North Africa, the Levant, Andalusia and Sicily. This led to the flourishing of European intellectual engagement with Arab-Islamic culture and the assimilation of many of its achievements,

particularly in philosophy and experimental science, into Latin and Hebrew works. It also gave rise to European philosophical schools and movements influenced by Islamic philosophers such as al-Kindi, al-Farabi, Ibn Sina, Abu Bakr al-Razi, al-Ghazali, and Ibn Rushd.

However, Orientalism set itself apart, starting with the Crusades towards the East, through two distinct channels. Firstly, it established direct connections with sources that had not been introduced to the West, and secondly, it pursued its missions along two parallel and sometimes intertwined lines. The first line was the political-colonial trajectory, which began with the early Crusades that engulfed large parts of the Arab-Islamic world over successive waves of fighters and occupiers for approximately two centuries (1095-1291). These Crusades had colonial motives hidden behind a religious pretext. The other line is connected to what the Sicilian and Andalusian schools had left behind for European intellectuals, thinkers, and scholars who were eager to delve deeper into Arab-Islamic culture and its accomplishments across various fields of knowledge.

Orientalism played a crucial role in safeguarding a significant portion of Arab-Islamic heritage, preventing it from disappearing or being forgotten during periods of neglect that isolated this heritage from the broader community of scholars in Arab lands. These heritage elements were disseminated through modern printing methods, and, at times, scholars engaged in historical and textual analysis or translated them. However, it is important to acknowledge that these efforts were not free from errors, whether in the interpretation of texts or in the selection of materials, whether intentionally or unintentionally.

In the latter part of the nineteenth century, Capitalism was on the verge of transitioning into a new era, characterized by Imperialism. This shift marked the transition from an era of open and unrestricted competition to one dominated by monopolistic consolidation, prompting Capitalism to evolve into a new form. The world was being restructured to accommodate these monopolies, providing them with access to external resources, raw materials, and markets for expansion.

Within this global context, the Ottoman Empire, which included parts of the Arab world, became a focal point of the escalating imperialistic struggle. It became an attractive target for imperialist ambitions of the Western powers and aligned with their economic and political strategies. Furthermore, after World War I and the Bolshevik Revolution, the world witnessed the emergence of the first socialist state, situated in proximity to the northern borders of Arab nations. This enhanced the strategic significance of these regions in the calculations of Global Imperialism, particularly with the emergence of petroleum as a vital energy source.

In parallel with these developments, orientalists[58] directed their attention towards Arab-Islamic studies, particularly in the realm of philosophical heritage. They intensified their activities in the early twentieth century, capitalizing on the opportunities presented by World War I, which allowed the victorious powers to exert significant influence,

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[58] By "Orientalists," I refer to Western scholars, intellectuals, and researchers who engaged in the study of Arab-Islamic culture, history, and philosophy, particularly during the colonial and post-World War I periods. These figures were often affiliated with academic institutions, colonial administrations, or political entities in Europe and the United States. Their work was not always neutral or objective but frequently aligned with imperialist agendas, serving to justify and sustain colonial domination. These scholars played a dual role—on the surface, contributing to academic knowledge, but more broadly, advancing colonial interests by framing the East as inherently subordinate to the West, both culturally and politically.

advancing their imperialistic objectives, both militarily and in terms of energy resources (Muruwwa 1978, 134-138).

In the aftermath of World War I, the imperialist[59] drive in the Arab region adopted a strategy aimed at gaining control over Arab culture through two primary channels. The first was designed to take advantage of the disposition on the part of the Arab bourgeois class to play a subservient role to Imperialism, with a view to safeguarding and promoting its class interests. The imperialists understood that such a disposition was going to lead to a complete detachment of the bourgeois class from the broader public sentiments, thereby exposing its subservience and national betrayal, causing the bourgeois to lose its ideological appeal to middle-class social groups. The imperialists thus realized they needed to utilize a cultural tool intertwined with national history and culture. That was the essence of the first channel through which imperialists sought to control Arab culture by engaging in orientalist scholarship that was about studying Arab intellectual heritage in general, and philosophy in particular.

The second channel by means of which Orientalism evolved relates to the general ideological formation of most segments of Arab society, especially those with connections to various cultural and heritage elements and a more significant influence in shaping a new Arab thought among youth, students, teachers, professors, writers, and researchers from different class backgrounds. From their inception, Orientalist Studies of

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[59] The term "imperialist" takes on a distinct meaning in the aftermath of World War I. While Imperialism traditionally refers to the expansionist ambitions of colonial powers through conquest and territorial annexation, following World War I it increasingly encompassed more indirect methods of domination. Such as economic control, cultural influence, and ideological manipulation, as colonial powers sought to consolidate their grip on the Arab region under the guise of mandates and modernizing missions. In this context, imperialist strategies extended beyond military conquest to include the use of intellectual and cultural tools—such as Orientalist scholarship—to justify and perpetuate power asymmetries, ensuring control over resources and geopolitical influence in a post-war order shaped by the victors.

Arab-Islamic thought heritage leaned towards highlighting the idealistic aspects and

mystical ideas within this heritage above all else. They adopted a self-centric and

ahistorical approach to interpretation and analysis. All of this indicated that these studies

were not isolated from the context of Capitalism's evolution towards its imperialistic

stage and the intellectual and ideological preparation in countries targeted for Imperialism

to support this control with intellectual and ideological foundations built on the cultures

and national intellectual heritage of these countries.

In some sense, it appears that, whether during the Muslim Golden Era or over the

past two centuries, the interaction between Western philosophy and Arab philosophy has

taken on a clash-of-civilizations character, albeit perhaps not to the same extent or

intensity. For even if interest in philosophy on the part of Arab philosophers of the

Golden Era was inspired by a diminutive view of non-Muslim faiths or cultures, or

simply by a desire to glorify Arab-Muslim ways, that is not nearly as potent a driver of

interest in Western philosophy as the imperialist aims that philosophy—in the eyes of

Arab thinkers and philosophers of the past two centuries—was meant to serve. Perhaps in

no work of contemporary literature is this concern on the part of Arab thinkers more

methodically articulated than in Edward Said's *Orientalism* (Said 1978).

Specifically, like Muruwweh, Said sees through the colonial West's use of

Orientalist reasoning as nothing but a cynical attempt at exploiting and perpetuating

preexisting power asymmetries between the imperialist West and the underdeveloped

East. And projecting that as a statement of the obvious, he proceeded to define and

criticize the ideological contours of Orientalism and the underpinnings of its methods.

A central point of Said's critique of Orientalism lies in what he perceives as an overall supremacist framework within which the West simplistically and stereotypically projects the East. In his words,

> The point is that the very designation of something as Oriental involved an already pronounced evaluative judgment, and in the case of peoples inhabiting the decayed Ottoman Empire, an implicit program of action. Since the Oriental was a member of a subject race, he had to be subjected: it was that simple. (Said 1978, 207)

A corollary to this worldview, as underscored by Said, relates to a persistent attempt on the part of orientalists to approach the study of the heritage of the East through the prism of Western, especially European, heritage, culture, and philosophy. Says Said,

> For them (orientalists), all the Orient was their direct, peculiar experience of it. In them Orientalism and an effective praxis for handling the Orient received their final European form before the Empire (Ottoman) disappeared and passed its legacy to other candidates for the role of dominant power. (Said 1978, 224)

According to Said, what orientalists must have in mind here was to instrumentalize the notion of their professed deep knowledge of the people and societies of the East, whom they effectively considered as passive objects of scientific scholarship, to assert and reinforce the imperialists' control and dominance over the East. Along the way, and by such an intrinsically essentialist, if not outright racist, logic, orientalists sought to find a moral justification for the colonial West's drive to exercise and perpetuate such control. In Said's words,

> Along with all other peoples variously designated as backward, degenerate, uncivilized, and retarded, the Orientals were viewed in a framework constructed out of biological determinism and moral-political admonishment. The oriental was linked thus to elements in Western society (delinquents, the insane, women, the poor) having in common an identity best described as lamentably alien. Orientals were rarely seen or looked at; they were seen as problems to be solved

and confined or as the colonial powers openly coveted their territory taken over. (Said 1978, 207).

As compared to the transformation-in-heritage approach adopted by several of his contemporaries in response to the apprehension with which they viewed imperialists' assault on Arab heritage and culture, Said's contribution was arguably profoundly progressive. For rather than simply expressing pride in Arab-Muslim culture, or projecting a diminutive view of Western culture, he promoted approaching the study of the culture of different societies through the prism of humanism—a concept which he meant to embrace such organizing principles as parity, reciprocity, and empathy, all of which he sees as key elements in the quest for redressing power asymmetries, achieving social justice for the oppressed and marginalized, and, more generally, addressing the root causes of the prevalence, and scourge, of "otherness".

As may be recalled from the discussion of the minoritization of women in chapter 1 of this thesis, I argued for adopting a similar approach for redressing the social injustice endured by women. Specifically, I therein argued that, rather than looking for alternatives to the traditional philosophical canons to explain the persistence of social injustice and help inform an effort to redress it, promoting a shared sense of humanness, while applying the tools and methods of Situated Knowledges and String-figuring holds the promise of bringing to an end the injustice faced by minority groups.

The foregoing analysis of Orientalism reveals its dual role in both preserving and distorting Arab-Islamic heritage, often reinforcing simplistic and exoticized portrayals of Arab culture. This legacy has not only shaped historical perceptions but also continues to influence contemporary philosophical engagements between East and West. As we

navigate the complexities of these interactions, a critical question emerges: How have

modern Arab thinkers adapted and redefined their intellectual traditions in response to

lingering orientalist biases and Western dominance? In the section 2.5 below, I will

explore how these challenges have been addressed, examining the ways in which

contemporary Arab philosophers have reshaped their discourse to resist the impact of

Western hegemony.

2.5   On the Interplay between Contemporary Arab and Western Philosophy: An Orientalist Perspective

 The interplay between contemporary Arab and Western philosophy is deeply

informed by historical dynamics, especially those shaped by Orientalism.

In her book *The Holy War: The Crusaders and Their Impact on Today's World*

(2001), Karen Armstrong explains that the Arabs displayed a willingness to learn from

the people they had conquered. They eagerly embraced foreign learning, science, and

philosophy, notably drawing from Greek thought. This exchange of knowledge was a

two-way process. On the one hand, the Arabs sought to glean insights from the ancient

cultures that preceded them. On the other hand, newly converted Muslims sought to

reconcile their rich cultural traditions with their newfound Arabian faith. This mutual

exchange led to the emergence of a unique and distinctive Muslim culture. Armstrong

explains the challenge Muslims faced with "reconciling their diverse cultural traditions

with the Arabian origins of *Islam*"(Armstrong 2001, 47-48), in a process that

> involved integrating local customs with Islamic principles, leading to a syncretic
> approach in some cases. The preservation of certain cultural practices occurred as
> long as they aligned with Islamic teachings. Balancing Arabization and
> localization varied across regions, influencing art, architecture, and scholarly

contributions. The adaptability of *Islam* allowed for a dynamic coexistence of cultural expressions within a shared religious framework. (Armstrong 2001, 47-48)

Fast forward to the 19th century, Arab thinkers of that era were compelled to engage with Western ideas, which ultimately contributed to the emergence of the contemporary Arab national liberation movement. Initially, this interaction took on a superficial form, with Arab intellectuals showing excessive admiration for Western heritage and adopting some of its principles without significant additions or critical evaluation. This was illustrative of an instance where the "other" was seen as an "other" to be emulated, rather than feared or resisted. However, as suggested when such a possibility was raised earlier in section 2.2 above, such a view of the "other" was transitory. Indeed, as Arab public sentiment gradually coalesced into nationalist fervor, a growing pride on the part of Arab thinkers in their own heritage and a desire to explore their cultural achievements, set the stage for the emergence of an Arab adversarial sentiment toward Western heritage and culture. This process played a pivotal role in shaping the intellectual landscape of the Arab world during the first half of the twentieth century, with the initial return to Arab heritage representing primarily a regressive movement, even though it was, to some extent, progressive in the sense of it having been motivated by a nationalist drive to confront both old (Turkish) and new (Western) imperial colonial power and influences.

Egyptian thinker Mahmoud Shaker discusses the broader context of European Colonialism and its influence on the Arab world, particularly in Egypt. According to him, European powers sought to transform the Arab region for their benefit. This transformation was primarily political, with the aim of subjugating the region. Education

played a significant role in this process, with the British and French influence being

particularly pronounced. Shaker elaborates on this by explaining that

> the preparation for this era was long and multifaceted, consisting of training generations of (envoys) who would return from Europe to become the leaders of this profound and subtle transformation. These envoys were intended to establish a solid foundation for the transformation that was meant to gradually engulf us over time. (Shaker 1987,20)

However, as this approach proved insufficient, a more comprehensive strategy

developed. The new idea was to

> create successive generations of (school students) in the country who would be closely tied to this transformation. This was to be achieved by completely emptying them of their entire past, along with severing most of the social, cultural, and linguistic ties that connected them to this past. This void was then to be filled with sciences, literature, and arts—but these were to be their arts, their literature, their history, and their languages, meaning those of the colonizers. (Shaker 1987,21)

For his part, Hussein Muruwwa[60] discusses how the movement towards revisiting

heritage underwent a transformation. It transitioned from being a mere reproduction of

cultural heritage to becoming a movement aimed at reevaluating not only the

achievements of this heritage, but also the European colonialist and racist perspectives on

the heritage of colonized peoples. As discussed earlier in the section 2.4 on Orientalism,

this theme featured prominently in Said's treatise on that concept.

European theories of the colonial era aimed to devalue the historical and cultural

significance of non-European societies, severing their ties to their heritage and erasing

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[60] Hussein Muruwwa, a Lebanese Sheikh-turned-Marxist philosopher, played a role in the Lebanese National Resistance Front during the Lebanese Civil War. He was assassinated in 1987. Muruwwa's significant works span diverse religious traditions and include *Ma'a al-Qafilah* (1952), *Materialist Tendencies* (1978), and *Born a Sheykh, I'll Die a Child: Autobiography* (1990).

any sources of pride from their past. These theories portrayed those "other" societies as lacking intellectual and historical merit, suggesting that they could not contribute to civilization or culture, not only in the past but also in the present and future.

The transformation-in-heritage approach was viewed as progressive, but its practical application often ran counter to progressive principles, as it took on a bourgeois character, displaying a chauvinistic and non-democratic attitude towards culture. That was the case and, both in terms of its internal dynamics and external relationships, the transformation-in-heritage approach was the product and instrument of a Eurocentric outlook.

At the international level, there was a shift from 'European Racial theories'[61] that emerged in the 19th century, attempting to categorize social groups based on hereditary principles, often with biological connotations, to an alternative concept known as the 'Central European Theory'. As described by Muruwwa, "…by neglecting the concept of unity in human ways of thinking" (Muruwwa 1978, intro), that theory rejected the idea of philosophical thought existing beyond Europe. In response, the 'Eastern Central Theory' emerged, and it magnified the Eastern heritage's venerable values and their profound influence on global and Western cultures and philosophies.

Muruwwa discusses how the Pakistani philosopher Sharif Mian Mohammad

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[61] While not necessarily racist, these theories aimed to differentiate and sometimes legitimize social, political, or cultural differences. They gained traction by applying natural sciences to human study and highlighting distinctions between groups, contrasting with Enlightenment universalism. After the Franco-Prussian War in the late 1800s, race was used to define and solidify national boundaries, racializing markers of European identity and colonial discourse. Race was also employed to promote the protection of racial purity through eugenics. By the early 20th century, race as a purely biological concept waned, but the belief in nations having biological elements persisted. Ethnic categories continued to play a role in various academic fields, even as race as a primary explanatory concept declined. See: *"Racial Theories,"Encyclopedia of Modern Europe: Europe Since 1914: Encyclopedia of the Age of War and Reconstruction*, accessed September 19, 2023, https://www.encyclopedia.com/history/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/racial-theories.

asserted at the Twelfth World Philosophical Congress that Islamic philosophy provided

the foundational principles of humanity, introduced the West to historical sciences and

scientific methodology, laid the groundwork for the Italian Renaissance, and influenced

contemporary European thought up to the era of Emmanuel Kant—a characterization

Kant would probably beg to differ with. [62] For, as pointed out by Ian Almond in his book

History of Islam in German Thought (2010),

> Kant illustrates in his *Anthropology* (1798) his Orientalist perspectives and biases
> through references to Turkey and Arabs, perpetuating stereotypes about non-
> European cultures, emphasizing the need to maintain boundaries between Europe
> and the Orient, and reflecting a broader Eurocentric outlook, common among
> Enlightenment thinkers of his time. (Almond, 2010, 29-51).

That being said, Sherif's assertions were not without merit. However, projecting

them in absolutist terms and neglecting other historical factors, rendered them susceptible

to scholarly critique and imbued them with a partisan character as an alternative to the

discredited Western bias.

Muruwwa also took issue with another approach to the critique of Eurocentrism—

namely, that exemplified by

> …new Salafi trends imbued with a modernistic hue. Some of these trends
> introduced the concept of "updating" heritage, implying the coercion of past ideas
> into conformity with contemporary ones. This approach bypassed the various
> historical stages and profound changes that occurred in the realm of heritage.
> Moreover, it overlooked the economic and social conditions and scientific
> breakthroughs that engendered contemporary ideas—a historical impossibility
> outside of these specific contexts and breakthroughs (Muruwwa 2008, Intro).

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[62] Mian Mohammad Sharif (1893–1965), a distinguished Pakistani philosopher and Islamic scholar, is
known for his pioneering work in Muslim philosophy. See M. M. Sharif, ed., *History of Muslim Philosophy: With
Short Accounts of Other Disciplines and the Modern Renaissance in the Muslim Lands* (Pakistan Philosophical
Congress, 2004), accessed September 19, 2023, www.muslimphilosophy.com/hmp/default.htm.

In summary, Muruwwa summed up his own views on the contributions of the advocates for European centrality in philosophy as having

> …first imposed the attribute of contradiction on the relationship between Eastern and Western ways of thinking. Second, they neglected the concept of unity in human ways of thinking. And they actually added the absolute character to the existing differences between them. The roots of the centrality theory are primarily based on class, i.e., on an ideological basis. This is because Capitalism, in its development into Imperialism, needed political justification. In those circumstances, the bourgeois idea that the culture of the East was irrational, intuitive, and religious, in general, served certain political functions. Specifically, it provided a justification for the (rational) European culture's control over the (irrational) Asian culture. (Muruwwa 1978, intro)

To conclude, the historical dynamics shaped by Orientalism have deeply influenced the interplay between contemporary Arab and Western philosophy. These interactions have often been characterized by stereotypes and biases, which continue to impact the engagement between these intellectual traditions. While Arab thinkers have moved from admiration and emulation of Western ideas to a more critical and assertive engagement, the legacy of Orientalism still casts a long shadow over these exchanges.

The essence of the Orientalist paradigm, prominent during the colonial era, lies in its reductive and stereotypical portrayals of the East, which have significantly shaped Western perceptions of Arab thought. These views have not only influenced historical interactions but continue to affect contemporary philosophical dialogues. To foster a more equitable and productive discourse, it is essential to recognize and address these inherited biases. Moving forward, the challenge lies in advancing philosophical exchanges that transcend these limitations, allowing for a more balanced and genuine understanding between East and West.

2.6 Synthesis: Toward Bridging the East-West Divide

A common thread that runs throughout this thesis was my interest in finding answers in philosophy to the fundamental question of what lies at the roots of the social injustice endured by minorities and how that injustice may be redressed. In this chapter, the analysis was centered on an investigation of the root causes underlying otherness and the associated dehumanization of "the other" in the context of an inquiry into the existence and validity of Arab philosophy.

Rather than examining the question of whether one could speak of Arab Eastern philosophy in the abstract, I thought it might be best to do so by an examination of how Muslim and Arab thinkers of the Muslim Golden Era dealt with the notion of "otherness" as embodied in *Qur'ānic* text. Underlying my choice of this approach was the enormous extent to which *Islam* had influenced and constrained these thinkers' thought processes. Such an examination revealed the considerable depth with which Arab thinkers dealt with such fundamental issues as those related to questions about the essence of human nature. That, by itself, attests to the existence of Arab philosophy.

This is not to say that Arab philosophy, or Eastern philosophy in general, can be viewed as distinct enough in the sense of it not having been influenced by Western philosophical discourse as to, by itself, provide an adequate analytical framework within which the West's minoritization of, for example, migrants from the East can be fundamentally addressed. And just as I argued in the chapter on the minoritization of women (chapter 1), deploying different philosophical approaches can help only if the marginalization of minorities in general is viewed as a direct consequence of the seemingly inevitable existence of the threatening other in virtually all forms of social organization. This serves the useful purpose of looking for ways by which a key factor

that underlies the emergence of "otherness"—namely, differentness, may be viewed and dealt with. Toward that end accepting differentness as a fact of life would be a useful first step.

When I started working on this thesis, I was curious about this tension in East-West discourse and the long-running debate about the reality of a cultural and civilizational gap between the two—a divide that persisted and withstood the test of time, notwithstanding their highly extensive interaction and interdependence. But, from the very beginning, my curiosity extended beyond the West's stereotypical depiction of the East as barbaric and lacking the means of proper understanding of the new-age civilization, on the one hand, and the East's similarly deeply rooted view of the West as a colonial imperialist enterprise that was intent on exploiting the East to its economic and geopolitical advantage, on the other. While understandable, such perceptions appear to have been so grounded in the life experiences of the oppressed as to overwhelm any will they have had to see beyond what they were taught about that threatening "other."

I admit that I was not an exception when it came to these perceptions. I come from the East, and the image of it I have is unsurprisingly one that is largely marred by the heavy shadow of a subjugated existence over the past few centuries. But what I always struggled with was the question of how a civilization, which, for nearly a whole millennium since the advent of *Islam*, soared to spectacular heights found itself thereafter viewed, even by the East itself, as hopelessly uncivilized and underdeveloped. The critique of Orientalism covered in this chapter may be useful for providing some insight into a possible explanation.

Specifically, when the imperialist West met an East-in-decline in the nineteenth century, the former sought to dominate the latter by, among other things, belittling the contributions of Arab and Muslim thinkers and scientists of the Muslim Golden Era, often portraying those as having been limited to translations of the works of earlier civilizations and cultures without engaging with them intellectually in a way that could have contributed to the emergence of a distinct glorious Eastern culture. In that Orientalist worldview, there was no such thing as a glorious Arab past, and post-*Islam* Arabia was no more than a continuation and extension of the chaotic and primitive Arab ways that had prevailed before the advent of *Islam*. And as if this was not bad enough, Arab bourgeois made matters a lot worse for the East when, acting to preserve their status and safeguard their interests, they were quick to endear themselves to the West by latching on to its narrative.

By doing so, Arab bourgeois served not only as a facilitator, but also as an accelerator in the denigration of their own culture and heritage, and in the perpetuation of a self-image of the East that was steeped in a mindset of deep insecurity. That was because from the midst of that upper class came the professionals who wrote the textbooks, educated the young, and ultimately possessed or at least gained access to, political power.

Bedeviled by such a state of unsure-footedness, Arabia's view of the other that was the imperialist West, and, through that prism, of itself, started to shift in the aftermath of World War I. However, while the shift in sentiment toward the West was, for the most part, unidirectionally negative, the same cannot be said about the shift in how the East tended to view itself, which could more aptly be described as manifesting itself in an

erratic, if not chaotic, succession of ebbs of submissiveness and flows of resurgent patriotism and resistance.

Even for many decades after gaining their independence, the nation states of Arabia never seemed to be able to completely break away from the Western orbits of subservience. And, to this day, many, if not all, of Arabia's political regimes expend a lot of energy on trying to find a balance of sorts between what their citizens see as their interest with how much they (the rulers) perceive the traffic in the West can bear. Indeed, so extensive was the West's cultural debasement of the East that the people of Arabia continue to this day to vacillate in their feelings, at once viewing the West with disdain and admiration.

As to the West's view of the "other" that was the East, it appears that the persistence of the ill- effects of the said cultural debasement, which was largely brought about by the bourgeois' involvement in propagating the Western cultural influences, did not come without challenges to the West itself. Particularly since the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Western powers often found themselves struggling to reconcile their failure to address the root causes of injustice with which they afflicted the East—in their pursuit to further their imperialistic aims—with the lofty principles they themselves enshrined in that declaration. And, far too often, they failed miserably at that. Indeed, what started as a deliberate attempt to subjugate the East by denigrating its culture and heritage ended up being a running source of moral failure on the part of the West.

The dehumanization of refugees from the East by the West (See Cross Coda) is but one manifestation of that failure. For having invested so much and for so long in the

idea of the inferiority of Eastern cultures and civilizations, how was the West expected to view modern-day migrants from the East as anything but, at a minimum, culturally different as to warrant considering them as the "other" to be marginalized and dehumanized? Never mind that refugee rights are supposed to be protected under the said declaration of human rights, as well as other bodies of international law, like the Geneva Conventions, the fact of the matter remains that such a dehumanizing view became deeply entrenched.

The foregoing analysis of the nature and consequences of the West-East divide, which builds on and extends the critique of Orientalism discussed earlier, may serve the purpose of informing the policy debate as to what to do about this divide, and, more generally, about the ever-present "other" to be marginalized. If, as I have maintained throughout this chapter, cultural differentness, or the perception thereof, is a key contributor to the formation of divides and faultlines, then preventing cultural differentness from turning into a never-ending clash of civilizations requires looking beyond a culture itself to the people who make it and who are defined and shaped by it.

Only through such a humanist prism does it become readily obvious, to the denigrator and denigrated alike, that to put down a particular culture is to view its makers as lesser humans. Neither the West nor the East can or should be expected to find such a form of coexistence acceptable. Nor, history tells us, is it sustainable.

Cross Coda

An Examination of the West's Marginalization of Middle Eastern Immigrants

The influx of millions of migrants from the Middle East into Europe over the past decade has rekindled a multifaceted, long-running debate on the assimilation of refugees from the East, if not even their admission in the first instance, into the West.[63] With that came a heightened interest, both in Eastern and Western philosophies, in the explanatory power of such paradigms as modernity, Colonialism, post-Colonialism, and Imperialism, visa-a-vis the intensification of the challenges and problems associated with migration. Of particular interest was the deepening of the pre-existing problems faced by ethnic minorities in general, as well as problems related to being a minority, like sexual minority, gender minority, or a combination thereof, within that broader minority class. And within that domain of interest, a central issue was the further incidence and prevalence of inequality and demonization of the "other," especially the marginalized minorities within the migrant communities. However, that interest is yet to translate into efforts that could meaningfully mitigate, much less fundamentally redress, the injustice endured by the marginalized "others."

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[63] At the end of June 2023, 110 million people worldwide were forcibly displaced from their homes due to persecution, conflict, violence, human rights violations and events seriously disturbing public order. Among those were 36.4 million refugees, (30.5 million refugees under UNHCR's mandate, and 5.94 million Palestine refugees under UNRWA's mandate). There were also 62.1 million internally displaced people, 6.08 million asylum seekers, and 5.6 million Venezuelans refugees or in need of international protection . There are also millions of stateless people, who have been denied a nationality and access to basic rights such as education, healthcare, employment and freedom of movement.
"Refugees", United Nations: Global Issues.https://www.un.org/en/global-issues/refugees

To create an inclusive society at a time of increasing migration, there is a need to understand and bridge the philosophical thinking about merging, or a harmonious coexistence of, several distinct cultures in each society. On one side, migrants from the East have impacted Europe politically and economically, and they are seen as having, to say the least, confounded it socially and culturally. On the other hand, while the immediate concern is usually about strained budgets and limited absorptive capacity in host countries, the social and cultural concerns quickly take precedence, thereby further complicating the task of attaining inclusion—a task already burdened by the perception of migrants as outsiders, strangers, and a threat; hence, in turn, causing them to see themselves as marginalized, excluded, and dehumanized "others".

My interest in looking for answers in philosophy to the fundamental question of what might underlie viewing migrants from the East as a "threatening other" stemmed from the controversy that was triggered by the massive influx into Europe of millions of Syrian refugees amidst the unprecedented violence that engulfed their country in the aftermath of the eruption of the Arab uprisings in 2011.[64]

To be sure, there were points in time during what, over the past decade, was a wave after wave of migrants fleeing the ravages of war in Syria for safety in neighboring countries, particularly Lebanon, Jordan, and Turkey, and, through the latter, in Europe, when the world would seem to be collectively seized with the plight of those refugees. Typically, that was the case each time a highly crowded, sea-unworthy vessel with refugees on board capsized. But, not a single such tragedy came close to being as jarringly impactful as that which led to the demise

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[64] The Arab uprisings, also known as the Arab Spring, were a series of pro-democracy protests across several Arab countries in 2011. These uprisings were largely driven by widespread discontent with oppressive regimes, economic hardships, and mismanagement in the region. The protests began with the self-immolation of Mohamed Bouazizi, a street vendor in Tunisia, in December 2010.

of a Syrian toddler in September 2015. I vividly recall—undoubtedly, like millions around the globe—how an image of Alan Kurdi's lifeless, tiny body washed up face-down on a Turkish Mediterranean shore shocked the world to the core.

However, no sooner had the ensuing sense of shock and collective guilt subsided than anti-immigrant sentiments and rhetoric, once again, dominated the discourse on migration from the East (or South) to the West (or North). While, as mentioned earlier, such sentiments were predominantly channeled through expressions of concern in Western host countries about limited absorptive capacities in the face of a massive influx of migrants, often times the reality was more about an underlying clash of civilizations and cultures than can be conveniently admitted. This was especially true of East-to-West migration. Apparently, the exodus of millions of refugees from Ukraine in the aftermath of the Russian invasion in 2022 did not stoke the kind of anxiety and fear in Europe as did that of the millions of Syrians who also were fleeing for their lives from a war that, ironically, was in no small measure prolonged by Western intervention, both directly and through Western-backed regional allies.

But, beyond the issue of ethnicity-driven prejudices, as minority communities, refugees from the East often find themselves collectively viewed, and viewing themselves, as the marginalized, excluded, and even the dehumanized "other." And, what applies to them as a collective, it is reasonable to argue, would tend to be doubly felt by such minorities among them as ethnic, sexual and gender minorities, having to endure the cascading of injustice that came with being viewed, through the prism of both gender and ethnicity, as the marginalized "other."

As discussed in Chapter 1, in trying to explain the staying power of the minoritization of women, I initially speculated that the dominance of a patriarchal order in the philosophical discourse had rendered the philosophical canons inadequate for the purposes of informing the

formulation of policies aimed at redressing the societal oppression of women. In a similar vein, on the question of the minoritization of refugees, I often wondered whether the dominance of Western thinkers in the philosophical discourse may have rendered the traditional philosophical canons inadequate for dealing with the demonization of East-to-West migrants in host countries.

While tempting, turning this speculation into a hypothesis that holds that obverse approaches to philosophy, rooted in Eastern rationality, might do a better job in dealing with the plight of migrants, as well as the sexual, gender, and ethnic minorities among them, is not a straightforward proposition. For one thing, it is not a given that such constructions exist, or even can exist, in the sense of such alternative paradigms being completely antithetical to the dominant approaches in philosophical discourse, and, for another, the geography-based identity of the shapers of those dominant approaches is most unlikely to manifest itself to the same extent, or to influence thought processes uniformly. This raises the important question of whether it may not be an exercise in futility for the search for a remedy to the perceived imbalance of philosophical canons to be anchored on trying to identify constructions that are the obverse of paradigms that, themselves, are fluid or loosely defined.

To answer this question, in this chapter I examined issues that pertain to the existence and validity of Arab Eastern philosophy, with a particular focus on what Arab and Muslim thinkers and philosophers had to say about the seemingly inevitable existence of a "threatening other"— an issue that is of central significance to my research inquiry. This examination, which served the useful purpose of shedding some light on the extent to which Arab Eastern philosophy can be viewed as distinct from Western philosophy, or unalloyed with Western influences, pointed to the need for perspectivism in trying to understand the root causes that underlie the existence of "the other," and to fundamentally redress the social injustice that comes with otherness.

Chapter 3: Colonial-Modernity as Occupation

Colonial-Modernity aggravates both hierarchies, gendered and racial. Both the man defined by relations between gendered groups in pre-colonial societies and the ethnic other are withdrawn from the web of relations; they are mechanically assigned positions that are at once substantive and indeterminate. The concreteness of pre-colonial 'man' is turned into the abstraction that is 'Man,' defined as a universal position, and the whiteness of his representative is confused with a supposed absence of specific predicates. Racism, as a structure fixed by colonial relations, binds stereotyped positions, turning the subordinated category into a matter of biological destiny. This biologization withdraws the process from history, rendering it invisible and de-historicized, as an invention originating in expropriating and despoiling interests.

—Rita Laura Segato, *The Critique of Coloniality.*

This chapter examines the intertwined nature of identity, Colonialism, and gender oppression within the context of Palestinian resistance. It explores how Palestinian identity is performatively constructed under occupation, and how this identity is shaped by the dominance of patriarchal structures, both of which work to undermine personal and collective freedom. Through personal reflections and theoretical analysis, I aim to analytically employ as a specific form of colonial power the concept of *palestinization*. This depicts a uniquely extreme form of dehumanization experienced by Palestinians as well as their resistance to it. In order to do so I will also draw parallels with feminist critiques of representation and performativity, and I will critically engage with Western philosophical ideas, to deconstruct the framework of Colonial-Modernity, ethical responsibility, and gender issues as they relate to both the Palestinian struggle for self-determination and the broader quest for freedom from systemic oppression. By weaving together personal narrative, historical context, and philosophical reflection, this chapter offers a nuanced perspective on the ongoing resistance against not only a colonial power

but also the patriarchal norms that are prevalent in and across of the fabric of Palestinian life.

3.1 Palestinian Identity as Performative: An A-human Anomaly

Sometime in the winter of 1988 was when—I believe—I came of age. The scene then was dominated by the sights and sounds of the "stone kids"—Palestinian youngsters hurling and sling-shooting at armored Israeli army jeeps fitted with barbed windshields and windows. The stage for that modern-day reenactment of the David-Goliath[65] confrontation was everywhere in the Palestinian territory Israel occupied in 1967, including East Jerusalem—the city where I was born and raised. That coming-of-age moment could not have been more than a few weeks since something had snapped in the collective Palestinian consciousness. I remember thinking then that two decades of oppressive foreign rule could do that to any people; the Palestinian people were no different.

That—after decades of Israeli colonial occupation—a modicum of normalcy had started to permeate all facets of life in my home city was apparent. But equally obvious was that, in the end, such a sense of normalcy was not enough to forestall any longer a boil-over moment. Yes, people still reminisced about better days in a distant pre-colonial era. But, by and large, they did go about their mundane life chores as normally as could

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[65] Goliath, a Philistine giant defeated by David, has become a symbol of David's rise to prominence. See Britannica, "Goliath." *Encyclopedia Britannica*, August 1, 2024. https://www.britannica.com/biography/Goliath-biblical-figure. In 1 Samuel 17:49-50 (NIV):Reaching into his bag and taking out a stone, he slung it and struck the Philistine on the forehead. The stone sank into his forehead, and he fell facedown on the ground. So David triumphed over the Philistine with a sling and a stone; without a sword in his hand, he struck down the Philistine and killed him.

be expected. They shared the celebration of personal successes and festive occasions and the lament and agony of disappointments and failures. But they were also bound by a combustible mix of powerful feelings that, ironically, they seemingly labored hard to suppress and shun even talking about. Ranging from the shame of fear-induced acquiescence to outright fury in the face of relentless Israeli belligerence, those feelings could be bottled up no more.

That—I thought—must have been the moment when, collectively, Palestinians felt that they were no more than an unwanted class of non-citizen residents on their ancestral land. By any measure, this was tantamount to their feeling that their humanness was severely violated.

Even to the teen I was, this construction was exhilarating. After all, despite all odds, the dispossessed rose in resistance, undeterred by a most unfavorably skewed balance of power and unshackled from any sense of guilt for not having done so sooner. And was it not the case that David had won, with only a slingshot no less, in his confrontation with Goliath?

That intifada moment was also liberating, as for nearly the decade since around the time I became of school age, I had experienced the realization of not being a particularly wanted human, not because of who, but because of what, I was—namely, the female I was. Adding to my sense of guilt, especially toward my parents, for having been born a female was that my arrival in life turned out to be a harbinger for an additional six such unhappy arrivals before the seven of us got a bit of relief upon the much-awaited arrival of a legitimate heir to our father's name and lineage.

Such was the scene in the patriarchal social order I was born into. Even the customary pleasantries in utterance upon childbirth varied depending on the gender of the newborn. A male arrival was invariably greeted with a *Mabrouk* (a congratulatory expression that means blessed). In contrast, a female arrival fetched a mere expression of gratitude to God for the mother's safety, with such term, as if too subtle, typically immediately followed by words like, "may she be followed by a brother!" And it almost always was "followed" rather than "joined" by a brother!

A particular interpretation of the *Qur'ānic* verse, "Thinketh man that he is to be left aimless?" (*Surat al Qiyamah* 75:36) underlay much of my sense of guilt. That interpretation—inculcated in me by the third-grade homeroom teacher—held that, as with Karma, one would be punished for misbehaving. Thus, to the mind of the ten-year-old I was, I had brought the disfavor upon myself for having been born a female in what turned out to be just the beginning of a straight succession of seven females in a society that—I thought at the time—ascribed its preference for male newborns to the proposition that God was male.

Yes, that intifada moment was liberating. For it shattered, once and for all, the absurd proposition that victims of injustice were to blame for the injustice they endured. Just as the injustice endured by Palestinians cannot be considered less unjust simply because they persevered and resisted Israel's colonial designs, the injustice I endured for having been born a female cannot be considered any less unjust based on a similarly flimsy proposition for all I had aspired to experience was life as full-fledged human being. There must be another interpretation of the abovementioned verse, I reasoned. And that happened to be the most straightforward of all possible interpretations—namely, that

there was a high meaning for all of us, humans, coming into a universe that is the home of all forms of God's creation.

However, to believe, as one must, that victims of injustice should not be blamed for their fate is not enough of a remedy. Perpetrators of injustice, be they colonial powers or those in control of the levers of power in a patriarchal social order, are not likely to give up on continuing to deflect and evade responsibility for their designs and actions. They never did willingly. For their part, however, those afflicted by injustice should go well beyond what has become a customary reiteration of expressions of moral outrage. They should not adopt or try to find ways to live with it. Instead, they should exercise their absolute right to resist it.

As a little, curious girl experiencing growing up amid a dominant patriarchal order, adaptation in the sense of going along and getting along was a compelling, if not the only, way to go. I learned to behave following what was required to be a good woman– an ensemble to a man, for better or worse. He is a man. This gives him all the alibis for his deeds. Thus, what I thought of as adaptation was, in fact, nothing but subservience. It took a while before I got to that realization, and by the time I did, nothing short of resistance was needed for me to break away from this role—a role, I thought, was one of my own orchestrating.

My life as a female who grew up in a patriarchal structure into the woman I am today is nothing but a mirror reflection of my life as a Palestinian living under occupation, which was not a lesser challenge to maneuver than living as a female in a patriarchal social order. That meant a life of pretentious attempts to be normal and treated as a normal human being. I never thought of equality as a basis for what I wanted from

life. I believed in the uniqueness of being me—me, the female, and the Palestinian. As much as I tried to tinker with the male counterpart in my gender reality, trying to prove that we were created to make a life together, I put every effort into resisting the occupation as an ugly act of existence that, as it oppresses and torments Palestinians, takes away humanity from Israelis. I wanted to see them as worthy humans as I am when moralizing our society.

Just as you cannot be a loving parent if you discriminate between your children based on gender, or any other physical trait for that matter, you cannot be a moral human if you allow yourself to be a part of a racist occupation regime. It does not matter if that parent provided the best upbringing, schooling, clothes, and other life necessities. Likewise, it does not matter if the occupation regime provided cleaner roads, a superior social security system, albeit only to some of the occupied, big malls and supermarkets, or spiffy soldiers in comparison with dirty streets and small grocery stores, and ragtag security personal surveilling your every move in the Palestinian-ruled territories.

I tried to be a good wife and act like an independent, educated woman.

I tried to be a resisting Palestinian by being resilient under occupation.

I wanted to be the good wife and the good Arab in the best way of what goodness meant.

However, a good wife is an obedient, grateful wife in a patriarchal life.

A good Arab in an occupation context is a subservient thankful resident.

I brilliantly lived life with such manipulation of the most coercive systems: Patriarchy and occupation. Goodness should win, I firmly believe.

One day, I was on one of my travels through Ben Gurion airport—an experience smack of racism in the most visible ways. A number classifies your class of citizenship

and the level of threat you were perceived to pose to the regime. The number "6" has been my number for a long time until I presume, I was moved down to "5" with age. With that "upgrade," life became heavenly.

No more body checks and stripping in front of a young female soldier, apologetically asking you to take off your clothes, politely demanding a colleague witness the operation, and nicely and hurriedly touching every part of your body.

What projects in the worse demeaning scenes of humiliation played itself out in a funny way as an imagined experience with VIP service: a free massage and line-skipping until the duty-free. Exactly like my marriage, until the moment I decided to break that frame of an image that I had carefully crafted and projected for more than a decade.

On that trip to the airport, I wore the most miniature clothes possible—a mini dress with underpants only and slippers. After becoming an expert on what sets off the alarm of the scanning machine, I realized the fewer clothes you put on, the better; getting rid of a pair of pants that button may be suspicious. Jewelry was an extra that one does not need in travel. Bras are always tricky business; unpredictable when and how they may trigger the buzzer.

I am ushered into the machine to see every part of my body being screened with another stranger on the phone giving directions on where to look more. My almost naked body was too revealed to be suspicious. After checking every single inch in my body, luckily not that big a body back then, an alert came in the machine saying "anomaly." It was the first time I had read this word. Nevertheless, it felt so reflective. I did not need to look it up. It felt so much like me.

The anomaly that made the machine alert flash red was cynically a stretch mark left deeply under my navel resulting from giving birth to my first child.

The soldier was asking me in response to a question from the other side of the machine: did you ever have any surgeries? I could feel the panic, the consortium of pathology specialists surrounding my navel and its stretch marks, analyzing, diagnosing, and thinking of what that operation was about. Smiling with a whiff of cynicism, I quipped: "oh, that…. it was the first in a sequence of processes involving a Palestinian child coming to life. To be exact, three more followed."

I thought they were right to worry. After all, those deeply engraved stretch marks that defined my body anomaly were evidence of four more Palestinians coming into life.

Anomaly is what defines what I am, I thought. It is what I am, not who I am, no matter how well I behave or perform.

This is how my story as a woman constructs itself in a performative structure of Palestinianism—a performative structure of an a-human being an anomaly in the midst of normality. Unlike a transgender person's experience with a similar anomaly buzz of a body-check machine at another airport (Cortez 2015), the transgender person does know that he/she is not either sex the society forces on him/her. He/she knows that the people around him/her do not understand his/her identity and are often intolerant, in denial, and repulsive. However, in the Palestinian a-human case, one cannot know what to expect and when; yet, one must always be prepared, tolerant, and accepting of any behavior toward him/her regardless of context or circumstance.

The Palestinian a-human body can be prominently female or female body. He/she can also be inside a transgender body. He/she can be white or black. He/she can be

covered and veiled in what the eye may see as conservative and primitive, and he/she can also be uncovered in what the eye may perceive as liberal and modern. However, being Palestinian will make him/her not a particular case of humanity, but a *palestinized* case of being an a-human.

Hence, the struggle of a Palestinian is not just about identity. It is not just a struggle in the face of racism, ethnic cleansing, and apartheid within a colonial occupation. Nor is it a gender struggle in the face of violence and a domineering patriarchal structure. It is a struggle to fit into the human race as a human being.

Nevertheless, in the Palestinians' struggle to affirm their existence as people within the human sphere of normality, they need to fit in the performative spectrum of gender. Judith Butler took her clue on how to read the performativity of gender from Jaques Derrida's reading of Kafka's 'Before the Law': "There, the one who waits for the lawsuits before the door of the law attributes a certain rule for the law through which one waits. The anticipation of an authoritative disclosure of meaning is how the authority is attributed and installed. the anticipation conjures its object" (Butler 1999, xiv).

However, to stand before the law, one needs representation. Here, the Palestinians fall into another dilemma of a cultural and existential discourse reflected and represented in the current political fiction.

So, while Palestinians try to acquire their status within humanity as humans, not a-humans, they also need to preserve an identity that may grant them a political status but is bound by a political representation that is more disruptive than constructive. As with gender, and according to Butler, the "foundationalist reasoning of identity politics tends to assume that identity must first be in place for political interests to be elaborated and,

subsequently, political action to be taken" (Butler 1999, 181). She further argues that political recognition requires 'agency,' often tied to the viability of the 'subject,' where the subject is presumed to have a stable existence prior to engaging with cultural negotiations. Alternatively, if the subject is culturally constructed, it is vested with agency as Butler argues that as "the capacity for reflexive mediation," remaining intact despite cultural of its cultural embeddedness (Butler 1999, 182)

This dynamic is particularly relevant to the relationship between Palestinian identity and resistance. For Palestinians, identity is inseparable from resistance. The act of performing Palestinian identity inherently involves an act of resistance, as Palestine exists as an occupied, non-state entity. In this context, to perform Palestinian identity is to confront and challenge the structures of occupation and erasure. Resistance becomes the vehicle through which Palestinian identity asserts itself in a global framework.

3.2 Philosophical Reflections on Identity and Resistance

3.2.1   On Understanding My Own Struggle

In understanding my own struggle and that of my people, I found it essential to engage with larger political and philosophical theories. Concepts from modernity, Colonialism, and Gender Studies offer valuable insights into the nature of power, identity, and resistance—each of which shapes the Palestinian experience. These frameworks help contextualize the lived realities of Palestinians under occupation, revealing how systemic oppression functions not only as a political tool but also as a force that shapes personal identities and collective narratives. By grounding the Palestinian struggle in these larger

discourses, we can better understand how various forms of domination—from Colonialism to patriarchy—intersect to maintain control and perpetuate inequality.

Political theories attempted to define factors that may have contributed to the current state of deterioration in the human condition in virtually all corners of the world. The westernization of the world started in the 15th century. It closed its first circle of domination in the twentieth century when a new world order began to emerge after centuries of seemingly never-ending colonialization and colonial rivalries. Civilization states were replaced with nation-states. Two poles of dominance rose to the helm of control of the world we live in today: one embracing Capitalism and the other Communism.

In between the two poles of dominance—while empires, kingdoms, and califates were replaced with democracies or autocracies—Colonialism, Imperialism, and violence continued to shape the different power outcomes while creating or deepening power asymmetries under the notion of modernity. Westernization, which encapsulates itself within the control of colonial powers, is challenged by de-westernization. As a result, the question of morality required a philosophical intervention to at least ameliorate the ill effects of those outcomes and asymmetries on the human condition.

Moralizing such dominance resulted in creating a universal codification by the Council of the League of Nations (1920)[66], the establishment of the United Nations (1945)[67], the International Humanitarian Law (contained in the four Geneva Conventions

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[66] The League of Nations, established in 1920, was disbanded in 1946, with its functions transferred to the United Nations. See *Encyclopedia Britannica*, "League of Nations," July 29, 2024. https://www.britannica.com/topic/League-of-Nations.

[67] The United Nations was established in 1945 after the signing of the UN Charter. See "History of the United Nations," United Nations, accessed August 9, 2024, https://www.un.org/en/about-us/history-of-the-un.

of 1949)[68], and, in the context of the question of Palestine, United Nations General Assembly Resolutions 147 and 194[69] as well as other bodies and conventions concerned with upholding human rights.

Some took issue, however, with the notion that, considering the context in which they emerged, such components and organs of the architecture of the world order could deliver on the need for a genuine promotion and protection of human rights. For example, Argentinian thinker Walter Mignolo argues that

> the whole argumentation of human rights when there was a constant claim of charging China with violations of human rights, which is of course not to be dismissed, but at the same time you cannot try the violations of human rights in the west and the same time you cannot elaborate that if the UDHR (Universal Declaration of Human Rights)[70] was invented to remedy the disaster that the west made. The UDHR comes afterward. It comes after Hitler's holocaust, Stalin's genocides, and Truman's nuclear bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. That is the kind of dispute of these organizations as full force labor on the political level. (Mignolo 2016)

In any event, by the entry of the 21st century, Colonialism was no longer viewed or proclaimed as a good act, and the curtain fell on it progressively over the period 1960

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[68] The Geneva Conventions, updated in 1949, outline humanitarian principles in war. See Malcolm Shaw, "Geneva Conventions," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, July 20, 2024. https://www.britannica.com/event/Geneva-Conventions.

[69] UN General Assembly Resolution 194 (III), adopted on December 11, 1948, affirms the right of refugees to return to their homes and calls for compensation for those who choose not to return. https://www.unrwa.org/content/resolution-194

[70] The UDHR, adopted in 1948, is a foundational document in human rights. See United Nations, "Universal Declaration of Human Rights," accessed August 9, 2024, https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights.

to 1988.[71] The same cannot be said about occupation, as that had flourished and found justification over that period.

To this day, occupation remains justifiable to some. In that worldview, there is always a reason to intervene. Examples of such interventions include the occupation of Cyprus (1974) by Turkey and Afghanistan (2001), as well as Iraq (2003), by the United States and its allies[72], not to mention the proclamation of Israeli statehood in 1948 and Israel's subsequent occupation of what had remained of Palestine—namely, the West Bank and Gaza, in 1967.[73] Russia's recent invasion of Ukraine also amply illustrates this point. Even though generally condemned, this invasion is considered justified by the occupying power and its allies, like other acts of occupation of the latter part of the last century.

From another relevant perspective, modernity and colonization have been examined critically in Latin America. In an attempt to better understand the social change in their region, Latin American scholars engaged with modernity to historicize the geopolitical developments that led to the conquest of that part of the world. Aníbal Quijano was a Peruvian theoretician of the decolonial perspective who contributed immensely to the field of postcolonial studies and critical theory. He engaged modernity as an episteme through the conceptual category of "coloniality of power," where

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[71] Following World War II, decolonization accelerated across Africa and the Middle East. See "Introduction to The End of Colonialism (1960–1988)," *Gale Encyclopedia of World History: Governments*, accessed July 29, 2024, https://www.encyclopedia.com/history/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/introduction-end-Colonialism-1960-1988.

[72] Lassa Oppenheim defined military occupation as the control of enemy territory post-war, framed by The Hague Regulations and the Geneva Conventions. See Teresa Fajardo, "Military Occupation," accessed August 26, 2013, https://doi.org/10.1093/obo/9780199796953-0077.

[73] The Six-Day War (June 5–10, 1967) reshaped the Middle East, leading to Israel's occupation of the Sinai Peninsula, Gaza Strip, West Bank, East Jerusalem, and Golan Heights. The war intensified territorial disputes and led to U.N. Security Council Resolution 242, which called for Israeli withdrawal from occupied territories.

structures of power initiated by the process of colonization were the subject of study and critique. Walter Mignolo expands on this by describing decolonization of social theory as a form of epistemic disobedience, de-linking, decoloniality, and de-westernization (Mignolo 2012). For Quijano, it is an act of epistemic reconstruction.

As a result of such reconstruction, decolonial thinking becomes the recognition and implementation of broader gnosis or subaltern reason—a means of eliminating the provincial tendency to pretend that Western European modes of thought as universal, as Mignolo explains (quoted in Fúnez-Flores 2023).

Unlike the Western European understanding of modernity, the Latin American perspective contests modernity's historical, sociological, cultural, and philosophical underpinning. According to Fúnez-Flores, Mignolo thinks that modernity is a narrative fiction that conforms to half of the story- namely, one "that is composed of salvation, conversion, civilization, progress, development, and market democracy. That half of the story hides the logic of coloniality. Coloniality is the darker side of the rhetoric of salvation of modernity" (Fúnez-Flores 2023).

Mignolo further argues that

Emancipation and liberation are indeed two sides of the same coin, the coin of modernity/coloniality. While liberation framed the struggle of the oppressed in the 'Third World' and the history of modern coloniality that underline its history, decoloniality is an even larger project that encompasses both, as Fanon puts it, the colonized and the colonizer and therefore, emancipation and liberation. (Mignolo 2007,457)

Thus, in a conceptual configuration, according to Fúnez-Flores, Mignolo affirms that "Colonial-Modernity is a decolonial concept, "neither sociological nor anthropological, nor postmodern liberal or Marxist," and he argues that it reflects the

signature of decoloniality as an alternative framework (Fúnez-Flores 2023). According to Fúnez-Flores , Mignolo asserts that "the rhetoric of modernity hides the logic of Colonialism" (Fúnez-Flores 2023), and, quoting Quijano, he adds that "the differences between the dominator and dominated are spelled out in the race matrix, which is to classify and codify the population" (Fúnez-Flores 2023).

In any event, regardless of the extent to which there exists an episteme that can adequately inform the discourse on the world's experience with Colonialism, as well as the multitude of associated concepts, such as Colonial-Modernity, coloniality, and decoloniality, a strong case can be made for the proposition that the 1948 Israeli proclamation of statehood in Palestine stands out as a case that does not easily yield to stylized generalizations. Several factors underlie this difference.

For starters, the establishment of the state of Israel was the culmination of a colonial endeavor facilitated and enabled by another colonial power—namely, Britain, whose mandate[74] over Palestine (1920-1948) effectively acted as an incubator for the colonial power that succeeded it. Indeed, the fact that the British government undertook to support "the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people" well before it was granted the mandate over Palestine lends credence to the assertion that Britain's colonization of Palestine was intended to be the midwife for delivering its successor colonial power, which, as it was conceived from the very beginning, ended up being an occupation.

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[74] The British Mandate for Palestine (1918–1948) emerged after the First World War. See Avital Ginat, "British Mandate for Palestine," *1914-1918-online: International Encyclopedia of the First World War*, December 7, 2018, https://encyclopedia.1914-1918-online.net/article/british-mandate-for-palestine/.

Israel relentlessly tried to shield itself from being seen as a colonial entity. Since its inception, it has been wrestling to reconcile the reality of its colonial nature with the assertion that it came into existence as a fulfillment of a divine entitlement to the 'Promised Land.'[75] The 'Divine Will' had to be a critical component of Israel's story. For, on the one hand, whereas any power can undertake occupation and colonization with the ability to act on its desire to colonize, few powers, if any at all, can assert an Israeli-type divine privilege, as, among other things, that particular tenet of religious doctrine had dominated the discourse for thousands of years. On the other hand, Israel's rejection of the notion that, as a colonial entity, 'it was born in sin' had to be anchored in a hard-to-assail justification, and if it had a divine privilege to invoke, why bother with lesser justifications?

To be sure, Israel is not alone in trying to wrap its colonial occupation with a justification that appeals to a higher good. Colonizers have always thought it essential to allege that there was a moral justification for their Colonialism. And, when pushed, they continually appealed to their ability to colonize as a moral justification for their colonization, echoing the ancient Athenian enjoinder of having to rule when one can. In Thucydides' most remarkable account of the Melian debate, [76] there was no mincing of words on this score: "It is not a privilege, but rather a duty to rule when one can" (Crawly 1914). And if Athens is too ancient of an example, Rudyard Kipling's *The Man Who*

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[75] In the Bible, the "Promised Land" refers to the land God granted to His chosen people (Genesis 12, 26:3, 28:13).

[76] Richard Hooker, *Thucydides: The Melian Debate*, 1996, https://faculty.umb.edu/gary_zabel/Courses/Phil%20281b/Philosophy%20of%20Magic/Dante.%20etc/Philosophers/Idea/www.wsu.edu_8080/~dee/GREECE/MELIAN.HTM.

Would Be King (1888) parables about the moral authority of the British Empire during its imperial rule of India are not.

Thus, there was ultimately no colonization that could not be morally justified. Nevertheless, there can be no question that, since time immemorial, the colonial occupation has been an immoral endeavor, if for no other reason, precisely because it ultimately reflected the imposition of the will of the colonizer over that of the colonized. No matter attempts at wrapping its existence within Colonial-Modernity that sometimes used decolonial concepts, the colonial occupation would remain immoral. It is the "signature of decoloniality as an option" (Mignolo 2011). Thus, modernity is also not an anthropological moment of history. Instead, as Mignolo argues, "it is a narrative that was told and continues to be told by those in the driving seat. They continue to hide coloniality and decoloniality" (Mignolo 2011). Hence, "the task of decoloniality is precisely to unveil the hidden part of modernity with political intentions of doing something to move in a different direction" (Mignolo 2011).

3.2.2 The Israeli Occupation as a Case of Settler Colonial Occupation [77]

Israel sustained itself as an occupation with no regrets or moral questions, and it continued to reinforce its dominance by building new Jewish settlements[78] and expanding

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[77]   Settler Colonialism is a distinct system of oppression centered on the displacement, replacement, and erasure of indigenous populations and their cultures by settler populations. Unlike classical Colonialism, which typically involves the domination and exploitation of another nation for resources, settler Colonialism aims for the complete destruction and replacement of indigenous societies with the settlers' own cultural, political, and social systems. As Patrick Wolfe emphasizes, "settler Colonialism is a structure, not an event," that seeks to perpetuate the erasure of native peoples as a prerequisite for land and resource expropriation. Patrick Wolfe, "Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native," *Journal of Genocide Research* 8, no. 4 (2006): 387–409, https://doi.org/10.1080/14623520601056240.

[78] Israel launched its West Bank settlement project after the 1967 Six-Day War. See Sivan Hirsch-Hoefler and Cas Mudde, "History of the Settlements," in *The Israeli Settler Movement*, Cambridge University Press,

existing ones. So, Israel became a settler occupation that the Palestinians struggled to resist. At the same time, the world watched with a sense of alarm and even moral outrage, but not out of concern for legal normality.

The word "settlement" stands for a natural act of creating nations. We are all originally settlers. We all settled in our countries somehow, at some specific time. However, Israel's settlements are what Eyal Weizmann describes as "Politics of Verticality" (Weizmann 2002) in a context of a *Civilian Occupation* (2003), which defines the designed architecture of the Israeli occupation since its inception.

So, Palestinians found themselves fighting a settler occupation cascaded within another colonial occupation—namely, that of the British Mandate. And by the time they recognized the reality of this condition of dual occupation, Israel had already gone beyond the settler-occupation phase of its colonial endeavor to the point where the Israeli statehood was beginning to be projected on the ground long before it was formally proclaimed in 1948.

Major settlements became cities, and most of the occupied Palestinian land gradually became home to the state-in-the-making and ultimately to the state itself upon its formal proclamation. So, while the morality of Israel's colonial character was, as indeed it continues to be, called into question, Israel and its supporters regarded its creation as morally justified based on its consistency with the basic colonial principle of "having to rule when one can." From Israel's point of view, acting to have a divine promise fulfilled was the ultimate moral justification.

2020. https://www.cambridge.org/core/books/abs/israeli-settler-movement/history-of-the-settlements/376D67D6D56C4B506B18BAC650193870.

From one side, intellectuals, philosophers, and thinkers busied themselves with analysis that led to justifying or decrying settlements and occupation, with Postcolonialism[79]and Decolonization becoming the terms used to describe the case of the Israeli occupation of Palestine. Nevertheless, occupation remains sustained into a postcolonial decolonized modernity tools and applications that define the reality of living as Palestinians in occupied Palestinian lands.

On the other side, Israel, for its part, was continuing to expand into every possible sphere of dominance by seizing more Palestinian land while buttressing its moral appeal by projecting itself as an embodiment of modernity. Through that kaleidoscope, Israel was to be seen as the modern Western democracy in the uncivilized tribal East.

The Zionist movement thus succeeded in establishing a state for people without land on a territory that, for all practical purposes, was presumed to be uninhabited when in fact, it was—by Palestinians. And within the framework of this colonial enterprise, and what may be characterized as an application of Colonial-Modernity,[80] the people without land modernized the land by transforming tents, slums, and impoverished areas into modern urban cities. All the while, the indigenous people continued to be presumed nonexistent. However, they were not left alone, as the Israeli occupation deployed every conceivable instrument of ethnic cleansing to replace them with the "chosen" people in the Promised Land.

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[79]Shehla Burney, *Pedagogy of the Other: Edward Said, Postcolonial Theory, and Strategies for Critique*, Counterpoints, vol. 417 (New York: Peter Lang, 2012). https://www.jstor.org/stable/i40115948.

[80] Rita Laura Segato describes a monopolistic politics that "assimilates all otherness through the grid of universal reference." Segato, Rita Laura, and Ramsey McGlazer. "A Manifesto in Four Themes." Critical Times 1, no. 1 (April 2018): 198-211. https://doi.org/10.1215/26410478-1.1.198.

Palestinians thus become social bodies collectively violated in a systematic design of ethnic cleansing.[81] This is not just a question of expulsion; it is a persistent condition of forced displacement and isolation. And, to the extent they were not wholly expelled and dispossessed, they were displaced and isolated, including in areas carved out for administration by the Palestinian Authority (PA)—otherwise known in Palestinian political fiction as the State of Palestine[82]—that the Israeli colonial occupation conveniently used mainly to ensure that Israel would remain a Jewish-majority state without surrendering sovereignty over even an inch of historical Palestine while, at the same time, shielding itself, however unconvincingly, from charges of being an apartheid state. In Israel's reasoning, why should it be expected to accept as citizens with full political rights those Palestinians who are represented and administered by a political entity of their own? One problem with that logic was that Palestinians begged to differ.

In his essay "Power and Justice," former Palestinian prime minister Salam Fayyad elaborated on why the Palestinians begged, and will always beg, to differ.

> Justice is necessary for maintaining a proper balance in any given society. When our society's laws and power structures fail to safeguard the precepts of justice, equity is necessary to mend that imbalance. But, when equity is missing in the spirit of the law's application, obeying the law no longer makes sense. {…} How can an individual obey a law that reinforces their status as an inferior member of society? How can Palestinians accept life under occupation when they know they are meant to be free? (Fayyad 2013)

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[81] Ilan Pappe, *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine*, Simon & Schuster, 2007.

[82] The Palestinian Authority's state-building program in 2009 received international support, though peace talks in 2010 stalled. See United Nations, "History of the Question of Palestine 1917–1947: British Mandate," accessed August 16, 2024, https://www.un.org/unispal/history/.

Though not utterly surprising, it is ironic that those same Palestinians have lived yet another form of dual Colonialism. With the aforementioned political entity of their own—namely, the Palestinian Authority[83], having progressively turned into a police-state nonstate, Palestinians ended up with the worst of all possible worlds as they had to concurrently endure the oppression dished out to them both by the Israeli colonial occupation and by their own nonstate. This aspect of the Palestinian reality could be seen through the prism of the kind of collusion that Anibal Quijano had in mind in his assessment of the role played by the local elite class in maintaining colonial relations. Specifically, Quijano has argued that the local elite's role in maintaining colonial relations of power, dependency, and underdevelopment was disregarded by dichotomous and unilateral conceptualizations and political-economic analysis. As Quijano, quoted by Fúnez-Flores (2023), observed, "this false dichotomy disregarded, in one instance, the collusion of the local elite in perpetuating the forces of Capitalism, Imperialism, and Colonialism. It systematically made invisible the historical structural heterogeneity of Latin America."

Like in the Palestinian reality, Fúnez-Flores (2023) explains, "historic structural heterogeneity is constituted by a dense fabric of social relations articulated by power." Such social totality is configured by a structural heterogeneity that points to the historical specificity of each sphere of social life. As Fúnez-Flores elaborates on Quijano's framework, this perspective "enables one to conceive of social existence as a multidimensional totality composed of historically heterogeneous elements, which

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[83] The Palestinian Authority (PA) is a governing body established in 1994 through the Oslo Accords to administer parts of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. See *Encyclopedia Britannica*, "Palestinian Authority," July 31, 2024, https://www.britannica.com/topic/Palestinian-Authority.

simultaneously allows for a more complex understanding of the way Latin America and other regions in the Global South are entangled with the modern/colonial world system" (Fúnez-Flores 2023). And, in turn, as in the Palestinian cause, the historical-structural heterogeneity of power reveals a social totality that is constantly reconfigured through conflict, both within and between societies. As Fúnez-Flores (2023) notes, "the successful groups in the disputes for control can set a specific course for social change. Still, they do not determine them unilaterally or without the emergence of resistance by counter-hegemonic movements."

This construction reveals another salient characteristic of Israel's colonial occupation of Palestine. To help secure perpetuating itself as a Jewish-majority state, Israel resorted to spawning an indigenous political entity that was not too weak to make the occupation less costly to the occupying power, especially in political terms, but not ever strong enough to evolve into a full-fledged state any time soon, or ever. Indeed, viewed through the prism of such construction, the Israeli colonial occupation has pushed Colonialism's cynical exploitation of moral justification to arguably unprecedented heights.

Thus, for all its alleged modernity, the Israeli colonial occupation sought to sustain itself by afflicting the indigenous Arab population of Palestine with *palestinization*—an anomalous human condition—indeed, an a-human condition—that was the product of a relentless effort aimed at subjugating the colonized subjects by denying them the means and will to resist it. Toward that end, Israel's colonial occupation left no instrument of oppression and subjugation unutilized or underutilized. It forcibly

expelled, displaced, killed, terrorized, demolished homes, stymied livelihoods, and capriciously detained and deported. It is also co-opted.

One could argue that such means of coercion were a hallmark of Colonialism throughout history. But, unlike other colonial enterprises, Israeli Colonialism, particularly with its Zionist underpinnings, did not come to dominate and exploit the occupied, but rather to replace them. The very existence of Palestinians was denied, and the Israeli state-building project began by attempting to erase their presence altogether. Indeed, it was not a coincidence that acting as a facilitator and enabler for its successor colonial rule, the British colonial power had defined the indigenous Arab population of Palestine by who they were not. The Balfour Declaration of 1917 referred to them as the "non-Jewish communities in Palestine." [84] And, no less, it acknowledged only their civil and religious rights. By sharp contrast, that declaration not only recognized Jews as a people by undertaking to facilitate the establishment of a home for them in Palestine, but it also made it clear that the fulfillment of that undertaking was not to prejudice "the rights and political status of Jews in any other country."

Nor was it, therefore, much of a coincidence that Israel never referred to its Palestinian population as Palestinians but rather as Arabs, Israeli Arabs, or Arab Israelis. If their continued existence anywhere in Palestine had to be tolerated, they could not be Palestinians and, most certainly, not a Palestinian people. Indeed, even in the period

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[84] Arthur Balfour, *Balfour Declaration* (November 2, 1917), statement of British support for the establishment of a national home for the Jewish people in Palestine.

following the Oslo Peace Accords,[85] Israel scrupulously avoided calling Palestinians a people. Instead, they were simply Palestinians.

A notable exception to this denial occurred in the 1993 letters of mutual recognition[86], wherein the government of Israel recognized the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) as "the representative of the Palestinian people." Often overlooked, however, was the very high price Israel had exacted from the PLO in return for this "one-off slip up," with the PLO acting on behalf of all Palestinians everywhere, having recognized "the right of the state of Israel to exist." By doing so, the PLO[87] effectively but unambiguously accepted the superiority of the Jewish narrative over that of the Palestinians concerning the core question of who possessed the title to the land of Palestine. Thus, while in this sole instance, Israel recognized the Palestinians as a people—to impart indisputable legitimacy and meaning to the PLO's recognition of its right to exist in Palestine—it did not at all recognize any Palestinian territorial rights in Palestine.

Fortuitously for Palestinians, because of its ethnocentricity, the Israeli colonial occupation stopped at no boundaries in its pursuit of replacing the indigenous Arab population of Palestine, as it applied all kinds of coercion, and it did so to such an extreme extent that it unintendedly ended up palestinizing that population. The deep

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[85] The Oslo Accords, *Oslo I Accord* (1993) and *Oslo II Accord* (1995), initiated peace negotiations based on UN Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338.

[86] PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat's letter to Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, *Letters of Recognition*, September 1993, https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/israel-palestinian-letters-of-mutual-recognition-september-1993.

[87] The Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), formed in 1964, unified various Palestinian groups under one organization.

sense of victimhood inculcated in the collective Palestinian psyche due to that coercion became the starkest feature of a new Palestinian national identity. In the eyes of the Israeli colonial occupation, if you were a Palestinian, you were "the other" that had to be replaced, regardless of ethnicity, gender, faith, or any other background. That very powerfully united all those "others" in Palestine and elsewhere in all corners of the globe in a broadly shared sense of injustice and victimhood.

The Palestinian revolution, which started in the mid-1960s, is often credited with saving the Palestinian national identity from complete erasure by the Israeli colonial occupation. That may be true, but only in the sense of it having effectively attempted to replace victimhood with resistance as a key defining element of that identity. Some progress was achieved toward that end, but it was not before the eruption of the first intifada in late1987 that the Palestinian people worldwide started to feel a genuine, perhaps irreversible, sense of self-empowerment that garnered considerable international attention and sympathy. In no small measure, it also alarmed the Israeli colonial occupation, as it laid bare the limits to its coercion as a means of perpetuating itself.

Recognizing the reality of its failure to cancel the Palestinian people, Israel's colonial occupation resorted to supplementing coercion with a heavy dose of cooptation within the framework of what ultimately became euphemistically known as "the peace process." Within that framework, Israel succeeded in diffusing the intifada spirit. Unfortunately, the Palestinian national movement fell for the lure of statehood that was presumed but not explicitly provided for in the Oslo accords. The result was nothing but an embodiment of political fiction in the form of a state look-alike that, through a symbiotic cohabitation with the occupation, ended up serving no purpose other than a

mere vehicle for disempowering the Palestinian people and a key instrument for

perpetuating the occupation and shielding a "Jewish-majority Israel" from charges of it

being an apartheid state.

Having fermented for more-than-a century of the Israeli colonial quest and

occupation, *palestinization* has come to permeate and define almost all the facets of

Palestinian life. But, because it is a multi-faceted composite of a wide array of unjust

forms and practices, palestinization has proven to be highly contagious. One need not be

a Palestinian to experience a sense of it. All one needs to be is "the other" in any situation

dominated by power asymmetries. That "other" could be a woman struggling for her

inalienable right to life as a full-fledged human being in societies where patriarchal social

structures are the norm. It could be anyone enduring or facing the crushing weight and

pain of discrimination, cancellation, and ethnic cleansing. And yes, it could be any people

suffering from their government's misrule, heavy-handedness, and capriciousness. In

brief, to be palestinized is to be someone or a people whose humanness is violated.

But ultimately, the lesson from the Palestinians' experience with *palestinization* is

clear: justice is never given, it is earned by assertion. Those who hold power will never

willingly surrender it; they will continue to oppress until those who are dominated

assume full agency, willing their own freedom through the pursuit of justice.

3.3 Philosophy of Ethics and the Quest for Freedom between Modernity and Coloniality: An Obligation or a Commitment?

Our quest for freedom is part of our humanity. That we are human means we are

free; free to be the humans we are born to become and make choices that enable us to

become those "chosen" to be part of this magical universe. This thought may seem dreamy, romantic, or perhaps even silly when we live in a world in which the "chosen" excludes the "others" who do not belong to "their" specific category of humanity, with that being defined by, among other things, race, religion, ethnicity, color, or class.

Any trait can be deployed to exclude the "unchosen others" from "our" quest for freedom. However, Schopenhauer explains that freedom lies "beyond the phenomenon and human arrangements"(Schopenhauer 2008,445).

Like Hannah Arendt, I wish to call my dreamy thoughts a *human condition* (Arendt 1958), under which a man/woman on earth is given life characterized by natality (Arendt 1958). Arendt articulates the profound implications of natality, stating that

> All three activities and their corresponding conditions are intimately connected with the most general condition of human existence: birth and death, natality and mortality. Labor assures not only individual survival, but the life of the species. Work and its product, the human artifact, bestow a measure of permanence and durability upon the futility of mortal life and the fleeting character of human time. Action, insofar as it engages in founding and preserving political bodies, creates the condition for remembrance, that is, for history. (Arendt 1958, 8)

This notion of natality emphasizes the inherent potential for new beginnings with every human birth. Each human child is unique. Thus, as a principle, no human child will ever utter the exact words and do the same deeds as any other as long as the human condition is the condition of humans, not robots. As Arendt argues, this uniqueness underpins our collective existence, as we are both like each other and distinct from one another. Plurality, Arendt suggests, is what unifies us in the human condition: we are both like each other, and we are distinct from one another.

To Arendt, "plurality is the condition of human action because we are all the same, that is, human, in such a way that nobody is ever the same as anyone else who ever lived, lives, or will live" (Arendt 1958, 8). Consequently, she argues, worldliness imparts character to the world in which we move, a world consisting of material things that shape its essence. Arendt emphasizes that as humans, our desire to increasingly possess more of those material things risks the destruction of the earth. This notion shifts the focus of the human condition away from what that condition is to who we are and whom we want to be. As Patricia Bowen-Moore (1989) explains, this human condition defines our existence on earth, extending beyond the fundamental category in Heidegger's *Dasein* or "Being There," which means 'you are somewhere there in the world' (Bowen-Moore 1989).

Arendt develops Heidegger's concept of being in the world, which he used as a design, into a notion of being in the world with others. In *Hannah Arendt's Philosophy of Natality* (1989), Bowen-Moore explains how Arendt integrates both birth and death as critical elements of human existence, expanding upon Heidegger's existential analysis. Bowen-Moore explains:

> If being-toward-death is constitutive of *Dasein's* existential-ontological structure, so too is birth and the potentiality for beginning. While Heidegger never explicated the phenomenon of birth with the same thoroughgoing treatment given to the phenomenon of death, he did identify birth as a mode of *Dasein*'s being. Both birth and death form a continuity as 'ends' of *Dasein* in which *Dasein* exists 'between' these experiences as care: 'Factical *Dasein* exists as born; and as born, it is already dying, in the sense of being towards-death. As long as *Dasein* factically exists, both the 'ends' and they are 'between' are, and they are in the only way which is possible on the basis of *Dasein*'s Being as care'. (Bowen-Moore 1989, 5)

Nevertheless, the human tendency to exclude others comes from the aspiration to spread further into the horizons of freedom. Horizons take an earthly position that

requires space. Thus, freedom becomes the space 'I' gain from the 'other'...' Exclusion

becomes the synonym for 'my' freedom. Nevertheless, plurality, or worldliness, as Arendt

defines it, makes life a better place to live. It is closer to a *Qur'ānic* verse:

> O people, indeed We created you from male and female and made you into nations and tribes so that you may know one another. Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most pious of you. Indeed, Allah is Knowing and Acquainted. Qur'ān: *Surat al-Ḥujurāt* (49:13)

The oneness of the human race, Arendt asserts, lies in seeing that being human

and being free are the same in discussing human rights. That view has informed her

hopeful thinking on cohabitation between Israelis and Palestinians and the question of

human rights in the 1961 Adolf Eichmann trial in Jerusalem, as detailed in her book

Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report in the Banality of Evil (1964).

In that trial, the death sentence handed by the court—perhaps in part inspired by

the desire to make punishing the Nazi criminals mark the end of their most heinous

crimes against Jews, did not seem to comport with that narrative, but rather with the idea

that exclusion and otherness lead to freedom (Arendt 1964). In her words,

> the issue is no longer a particular human being, a single distinct individual in the dock, but rather the German people in general, or anti-Semitism in all its forms, or the whole of modern history, or the nature of man and original sin—so that ultimately the entire human race sits invisibly beside the defendant in the dock. (Arendt 1964, 286)

That also seems to be a better fit for a diagnosis of the philosophy of ethics that

underlay the Israeli drive to cancel the Palestinians by excluding them from the

"Promised Land." Through the prism of what appears to have assumed the standing of a

moral justification for their colonial occupation and the perpetuation thereof, the Israelis

sought to attain freedom by excluding the Palestinians rather than cohabitating with them.

It was as if Israeli independence could obtain only if the Palestinians were expelled, displaced, punished, or simply altogether banished from the face of the earth, thereby marginalizing their physical existence into an anomaly that makes them eventually repulsive and unwanted creatures.

This is when the moral obligation for those "chosen" humans ceases to be a burden and becomes instead a commitment to eradicate those unworthy a-human beings. As discussed earlier in section 3.3 Levinas' philosophy further illuminates this dynamic. He posits that

> the face resists possession, resists my powers. In its epiphany, in expression, the sensible, still graspable, turns into total resistance to the grasp... The face, still a thing among things, breaks through the form that nevertheless delimits it. This means concretely: the face speaks to me and thereby invites me to a relation incommensurate with a power exercised, be it enjoyment or knowledge. (Levinas 1969, 197-198).

Levinas' ethical philosophy emphasizes the face of the "other" as a direct and unavoidable call to responsibility, urging us to engage ethically beyond the boundaries of power or possession. In " Ethics and Politics" an article in *The Levinas Reader* (1989), Levinas reflects on the Palestinian conflict through the lens of the Jewish Diaspora, arguing that this historical experience necessitates an ethical obligation for Israel and Zionism. He asserts that

> This ethical heritage has to be borne today by Israel and Zionism. Both are therefore more than a purely political doctrine, since self-affirmation from the outset must entail a responsibility for the other. The powerful Israel, confronting a weak Palestinian people, is hostage to the other's vulnerability, for it is a state that must embody a prophetic morality transcending any purely political thinking. (Levinas1989, 267) [88]

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[88] Emmanuel Levinas, "Zionism," interview with Shlomo Malka, in *The Levinas Reader*, ed. Seán Hand (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989), 267.

However, Levinas's interpretation of Zionism is paradoxical. While he acknowledges the vulnerability of the Palestinians and the ethical responsibility it invokes, he frames this within a context that reaffirms the primacy of Jewish existence, leaving Palestinians as the perpetual "other" in a political moral limbo.

Levinas further explains that

> Zionism, allegedly a purely political doctrine, both carries within itself the image in reverse of a certain universality and stands as its correction... It is the position of an armed and dominant State, one of the great military powers of the Mediterranean basin facing the unarmed Palestinian people whose very existence Israel refuses to recognize. (Levinas1989,281)

In an interview with Shlomo Malka,[89] Levinas was asked pointedly, "You are the philosopher of the 'other'. Isn't history, isn't politics the very site of the encounter with the 'other,' and for the Israeli, isn't the 'other' above all Palestinian?" Levinas response, while philosophically complex, revealed the limitations of his framework when applied to the political realities of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

While Levinas calls for an ethical obligation to the "other," Ibn Khaldûn's concept of ʿAsabiyya offers a contrasting view of how in-group solidarity is often maintained through the exclusion or domination of the "other". To Ibn Khaldûn, ʿAsabiyya serves as the engine of social cohesion and political power, frequently at the expense of those outside the group. This framework starkly contrasts with Levinas's vision, as ʿAsabiyya reveals how the "other" can be instrumentalized to fortify in-group unity and justify exclusion. (see Chapter 2, section 2.1 and 2.2 for a detailed discussion of Ibn Khaldûn, ʿAsabiyya).

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[89] Shlomo (Salomon) Malka is a writer and journalist. He is editorial director for the French radio station RCJ (La Radio de la Communauté) and a regular contributor to the Jewish monthly *L'Arche*.

As discussed in section 3.1, Butler expands on this idea, suggesting that Palestinians are often denied this ethical recognition, effectively being rendered faceless in a metaphorical sense. This lack of recognition is a profound form of dehumanization, stripping them of their moral subjectivity and justifying their exclusion. Only then can they cohabit on this earth freely and safely. Representation of "us" and "them," "I," and the "other" remains a central issue here. Who represents the kind of cohabitation that puts us in a universe of morality?

Edward Said pointed out that Arendt fought courageously to create plurality in systems and bring inclusion to societies. The presence of "others," which Arendt refers to as the human condition of plurality (as explained earlier in this chapter) or "the fact that men, not Man, live on the earth and inhabit the world" (Arendt 1958, 7) is necessary for action because "we are all the same, that is, human, in such a way that nobody is ever the same as anyone else who ever lived, lives, or will live"(Arendt 1958, 8). Plurality encompasses the seemingly contradictory condition of humanity: every human is simultaneously equal and distinct. We are equal in that we are all human beings, yet we are different in that no two people can ever be interchanged for one another due to each human's unique personal history and perspective (Arendt 1958, 7-8).

> However, according to Mignolo, a problem with Said and others is that
>
> they tried under postcolonial theories, de-westernization, and de-Colonialism to maintain a relation of "alike" through dismantling or devaluing ideals with only different paths. Thus, these intellectuals ended up keeping the same dogma of the west in mind, even though they criticized it. The need to destitute the idea is something different. The problem is wasting time asserting the truth by dismantling or devaluing it while working in the same direction and following different paths. Each tries to convince the other to take his approach while, in effect, contributing to maintaining the colonial. People are discontented with the colonial, but their attitude is subject to the ego. (Mignolo, 2020).

Arendt's view that, as a unifying act, the creation of a nation-state is what brings the best out of people, may be a reflection of her having seen such creation through the American image of a nation-state when she wrote *the Human Condition* (1958). That is probably why she perceived Israel as a nation-state for Jewish people and others. Even though Arendt acknowledged the Aristotelian politics of a state (Miller 2022), where she thought that freedom requires violent freedom before it becomes freedom, the idea here is that some enslaved people will revolt to get their equal rights before all rights become equal. So, here too, there appears to lie the belief that the existence of "otherness" is necessary for the quest for freedom in one form or another.

Nevertheless, Arendt's commitment to plurality rendered her deeply skeptical of nationalism's tendency to suppress otherness. Judith Butler highlights this tension, noting that Arendt's concept of plurality necessitates the acceptance of cohabitation with those we do not choose to live among (Butler 2012).

Seyla Benhabib describes Arendt's political philosophy as embodying a form of "reluctant modernism,"(Benhabib 2000).[90] Consequently, cohabitation was a model through which she attempted to answer the Israel and Palestine question, with that being a binational state for the two peoples.[91]

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[90] Seyla Benhabib describes Arendt political philosophy as embodying a form of "reluctant modernism," which draws to Arendt's critical engagement with modernity through (1) her German *Existenz* philosophy and (2) her lived experience as a German-Jew in the age of totalitarianism. Benhabib explains that this "reluctance" is evident in Arendt's critique of the nation-state as exclusionary and her proposal of cohabitation as a model for addressing the question of Israel-Palestine. Seyla, Benhabib.2003. *The Reluctant Modernism of Hannah Arendt*. New Edition. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers. Originally published 1996. Series: Modernity and Political Thought.

[91] Hannah Arendt's *On Revolution* centers on the struggle against civilizations grounded in religious premises, advocating secularization as key to modern political hope. Arendt saw secularism as vital to overcoming defective forms of modernity. See Samuel Moyn, "Hannah Arendt on the Secular," *New German Critique*, no. 105 (2008): 71-96, http://www.jstor.org/stable/27669245.
Also, Arendt's view that the creation of a nation-state is a unifying act that brings the best out of people may reflect her exposure to the American image of a nation-state when she wrote *The Human Condition* (1958). Her

Despite Arendt's bold ideas, she remains a reflective representation of modernity that she chose to call reluctant, which is still an image of coloniality.

3.4 The Synonymity of Freedom and Cohabitation

The narrative in the views of Arendt always failed to see the "other" narrative but from her side of enlivening beliefs. She believed that her values were universal moral values, which implied that Western norms and ideals were the highest aspirations of modernity. Nevertheless, her concept of cohabitation underscores the limitations associated with viewing one narrative, to the exclusion of all others, as representing the truth.

From another angle, Donna Haraway perceives Arendt's analysis of Eichmann's inability to think as a surrender of thinking that laid the "banality of evil" as a particular sort that could make the disaster with its ramped-up genocides come true. Haraway argues that "thinking, in Arendt's sense, is not a process for evaluating information and argument, for being right or wrong, for judging oneself or others to be in truth or error" (Haraway 2016, 36) For Haraway, Arendt did not delve into bringing into the question of the geohistorical conjuncture being called the Anthropocene" (Haraway 2016, 36).

According to Haraway, "Arendt witnessed in Eichmann not an incomprehensible monster, but something much more terrifying—she saw commonplace thoughtlessness"

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understanding of the covenant, as exemplified by the Puritans' interpretation of the Biblical covenant of Israel, provides an additional lens to her reflections on cohabitation. The Puritans, drawing from their Biblical roots, saw the covenant not merely as a social compact but as a binding agreement with divine authority, emphasizing obedience and law rather than equality among rulers and the ruled. This theological-political framework contrasts with Arendt's later explorations of cohabitation in the Israel-Palestine context, where she envisioned a model that moves beyond the hierarchical constructs of governance implied in such covenants. Here, the Exodus analogy, often applied to the settlers of America, resonates with Arendt's broader reflections on "otherness" as a precursor to the quest for freedom, underlining the role of shared plurality as a foundational aspect of any political community. Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution* (New York: Viking Press, 1963), 171-172.

(Haraway 2016, 36). For such a state of thoughtlessness, the world does not matter. "The hollowed-out spaces are all filled with assessing information, determining friends and enemies, and doing busy jobs; negativity, the hollowing out of such positivity, is missed, an astonishing abandonment of thinking" (Haraway 2016, 36).

This quality in Eichmann as an example

> was not an emotional lack, a lack of compassion, but a deeper surrender to what Haraway calls immateriality, inconsequentiality, or thoughtlessness. Eichmann was astralized right out of the muddle of thinking into the practice of business-as-usual no matter what. There was no way the world could become for Eichmann and his heirs—us? —a "matter of care." The result was active participation in genocide. (Haraway 2016, 36).

As such, essential issues of class and representativeness include the fundamental question of how Edward Said represented the Palestinians as a whole. To be sure, he compellingly analyzed the Palestinian cause. But his cultural strays were closer to those, like Arendt, he found himself associated with in his academic world regarding identity. In a fascinating insight, Mignolo describes Edward Said in his work: *The Question of Palestine* (1979) as having come across more like Fanon than Edward Said the Palestinian, with Orientalism inspiring the professor of comparative literature at Columbia University. At the time in Latin America, thinkers and theorists were busy with Occidentalism, not Orientalism. They were preoccupied with Dependence theories, the problem of development, and the problem of dictatorship (Mignolo 2006, 312-31).

Edward Said and the Palestinian intellectual class formed, together with the social elite class, a Palestinian identity that is not holistic. One could argue that this is normal, and it is. However, in the case of Palestine, the issue is not that straightforward because the Palestinian identity is inextricably linked to—indeed intertwined with—the

occupation. That identity must be defined from within. As with Arendt and her view on plurality, it was good to think about and apply, but it only served a specific kind of political reality.

The fact that the Palestinian intellectual and elite class represents the Palestinian cause in the best possible way in front of the "others" who are like "them" created a gap between that class and the rest of the Palestinians who, by and large, perceived the Palestinian intellectual elite, or maybe better put, the secular-modernity class as "them." This led to a deformed political reality that straddled the space connecting those classes and created another gap separating the Palestinian masses from their leadership and their "other," distinctly elite social fabric.

The fact of the matter is whether refugees are at home or in the diaspora, elite, working-class, villagers, Bedouins, Muslims, Christians, Armenians, Copts, Kurds, Druze, white, brown, black, LGBT, fundamentalists, atheists, or seculars, Palestinians are joined by being a people under occupation. As such, they are all Palestinians in the eyes of Israelis, be they liberal, conservative, secular, religious, Zionist, white, black, Ashkenazi, Sephardic, soldiers, or academics.

Palestinians are "them," and they are joined by being *palestinized* in how they are treated under occupation; they all have to go through revolving steel-bar cylinders at checkpoints. They are all cantonized and separated by walls and barbed wire fences. They are barred from Israeli-only roads, and they are all subject to punishment that includes the violation of any Palestinian body in any manner, to any degree, or at any time as may be decided by an Israeli who feels so empowered by the occupation regime or simply by being an Israeli.

In *Precarious Life, Vulnerability, and the Ethics of Cohabitation* (2012), Judith Butler

brings in a comparison between two Jewish views, specifically those espoused by Hannah

Arendt and Emmanuel Levinas, who both "take issue with the classically liberal conception of

individualism, that is, the idea that individuals knowingly enter into certain contracts and their

obligation follows from having deliberately and volitionally entered into agreements with one

another" (Butler 2012,142).

On the question of Palestinians under the different versions of ethical philosophy

and the ethic of cohabitation as elaborated by Arendt and Levinas, there is a position that,

in principle, "suggests a set of Jewish views on cohabitation that demand a departure

from communitarianism, even Jewish communitarianism, and that may serve as a critical

alternative during this time when the state of Israel seeks to secure its claim to represent

Jewishness" (Butler 2012,139). Cohabitation stands opposite to dispossession in this

sense and contradicts ethics, and it categorizes ethics according to who is entitled under

the ethical obligation and reception.

Butler interprets Levinas as claiming that Palestinians have no face (Butler 2012,151).[92]

On the one hand, Levinas affirmed Israeli nationalism with a possible Judeo-Christian tradition,

asserting the unique relationship between Israel and the Revelation, linking its history to a sacred

continuity (Levinas 1989, 191). On the other hand, Levinas emphasized the ethical dimension of

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[92] Judith Butler discusses Levinas's controversial remarks on Palestinians in *The Levinas Reader* and *Difficult Freedom*, where he claims that Palestinians "have no face" and therefore lack ethical protection. See Emmanuel Levinas, "Ethics and Politics," in *The Levinas Reader*, ed. Seán Hand (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989), 289; and "Jewish Thought Today," in *Difficult Freedom: Essays on Judaism*, trans. Seán Hand (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990), 165. Butler further explores these ideas in *Giving an Account of Oneself* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1995), 90–96.

proximity, which he described as a relationship with the "neighbor," extending beyond kinship to ethical responsibility (Butler 2012,139-140).

According to Butler, Levinas's idea of proximity assumes a physical closeness where the "face" acts upon us (Butler 2012, 140). In contrast, Butler argues that, the ethical obligation may extend to those not in physical proximity (Butler 2012, 140). In other words, our moral obligation should not be confined to those who are from us or belong to us. At the same time, Levinas recognizes others who act upon us but do not belong to us, and we are bound to them, not under their sameness but by an ethical obligation.

Levinas dismisses Palestinians from the ethical obligation as a no-face people in the first place. He wipes their existence by removing their face from the body of proximity.

According to Butler, Levinas initially claims that ethical obligation

> demands to be ethically responsive to those who exceed our immediate sphere of belonging but to whom we nevertheless belong regardless of any question of what we choose or by what contracts we are bound or what established forms of cultural belonging are available." (Butler 2012, 140)

Thus, "the set of ethical values by which one population is bound to another in no way depends on those two populations bearing similar marks of national, cultural, religions, racial belonging. He (Levinas) insisted that we are bound to those we do not know, and even those we did not choose, could never have and that these obligations are strictly speaking, precontractual"(Butler 2012, 140).

In the *Origins of Totalitarianism* (1951), Arendt stresses that "the right of freedom is sometimes considered to be the very essence of human rights" (Arendt 1951).

By contrast, the deprivation of human rights, and therefore the denial of a right to freedom, she asserts, is demonstrated in a place where opinions are made insignificant and actions rendered ineffective (Arendt 1951, 296).[93]

However, for Arendt, the substance of her argument against Eichman in *Eichman in Jerusalem* was that he could choose which population should live and which should die and whom he could cohabitate with on this earth.

Even though Levinas claimed precisely the opposite, he denied the mere Palestinian existence altogether. By contrast, Arendt argued that Eichmann failed to understand that no one has the prerogative to choose whom to cohabit with the earth. For Butler, on the other hand, deciding on whom to cohabit the earth with is equal to determining which portion of humanity may live.

From one side, Butler argues that Levinas's claim on the rights of the Jews to cohabit on the earth was strictly seen through the lens of the violence that befell them in Europe. However, the otherness he discussed took a racist, genocidal approach to the Palestinians. By contrast, Arendt asserts that we should be

> under an obligation to live with those who already exist and that any choice about who may or may not live is always a genocidal practice, and though we cannot dispute that genocide has happened and happens still, we are wrong to think that freedom in any ethical sense is ever compatible with the freedom to commit genocide. (Butler 2011)

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[93] "The fundamental deprivation of human rights is manifested first and above all in the deprivation of a place in the world which makes opinions significant and actions effective. Something much more fundamental than freedom and justice, which are rights of citizens, is at stake when belonging to the community into which one is born is no longer a matter of course and not belonging no longer a matter of choice, or when one is placed in a situation where, unless he commits a crime, his treatment by others does not depend on what he does or does not do. This extremity, and nothing else, is the situation of people deprived of human rights. They are deprived, not of the right to freedom, but of the right to action; not of the right to think whatever they please, but of the right to opinion. Privileges in some cases, injustices in most, blessings and doom are meted out to them according to accident and without any relation whatsoever to what they do, did, or may do." Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1951), 296.

The unchosen character of earthly cohabitation is, for Arendt, the condition of our very existence as ethical and political beings. Therefore, following Butler's interpretation,

> to exercise that prerogative of genocide is not only to destroy political conditions of personhood but also to destroy freedom itself, understood not as an individual act but as a plural action. Without that plurality against which we cannot choose, we have no freedom and, therefore, no choice. This means that there is an unchosen condition of freedom and that in being free, we affirm something about what is unchosen for us. If freedom seeks to exceed that unfreedom that is its condition, then we destroy plurality, and we jeopardize our status as persons. (Butler 2011)

3.5 Feminist Trouble and Palestinization

It should not be surprising when thinking of gender in the Palestinian context that Palestinians see the resemblance, often the mirroring of gender issues at most, if not all, levels of their patriarchal existence—itself, like gender issues, mired in, and almost wholly defined in terms of, identity and representation.

As women, Palestinian women seek representation that emphasizes their identity and liberates them from Israeli occupation. Israel, in this context, represents the patriarchal male-dominated system, while Feminism is the Palestinian leadership that emerged in the quest for liberation.

My intention here is not to dismiss Feminism or the Palestinian leadership, for both sought to serve a noble cause, as they both endeavored to secure liberation from oppression and domination. In the process, they contributed to making Palestinian women not mere objects inside an oppressive, patriarchally dominated systems that attempt to maintain the presence of women in servitude to their patriarchy, precisely in the same way their existence is deemed necessary to the perpetuation of the other patriarchy that is the occupation.

However, this representation on behalf of Palestinian women lost much of its value and effectiveness, if not validity, as and when both Feminism and the Palestinian leadership started to make their advocacy for freedom from oppression more about them than about the purported subject of their representation—namely, Palestinian women and, more generally, the Palestinian people. Sadly, when Feminism became merely about Feminism per se and the Palestinian leadership's *raison d'etre* turned into a mere quest for perpetuating its rule, they both became instruments of disempowerment in an unholy trinity of patriarchal dominance and oppression.

A deeper dive into Butler's reasoning on how Feminism's representational failure has undermined its advocacy on behalf of women might provide helpful insight into the dynamics that led to a similar loss of the Palestinian leadership. With these two agents of change at work in the context of an oppressive colonial occupation in Palestine, their representational failures were magnified as they added a unique element of *palestinization* to the plight of Palestinian women and, more generally, that of the Palestinian people in their quest for freedom.

Like Annie Ernaux, I maintain, as MclLvanney argues, that "true Feminism lies in the rejection of norms and stereotypes, in living one's life to the limit without recourse to politically correct definitions of behavior" (McILvanney 2000, 84). According to MclLvanney, Ernaux "aims to describe 'real,' representative female experiences rather than prescribe ideal, feminist modes of conduct, and it is this aim which explains her ability to incorporate any feminine thorns into her Feminism"(McILvanney 2000, 84). MclLvanney further contends that Ernaux's "interpretation of the aims of Feminism has

distinct Beauvoirian echoes in its adoption of the male model as normative"(McILvanney 2000, 84).

McILvanney notes that the alignment between de Beauvoir's *Le Deuxième Sexe,* and Ernaux's *La Femme gelée* in their portrayal of women's socialization. However, de Beauvoir presents women's sexual oppression not only as a matter of acculturation but, also as a matter of choice. To "become a woman," as McILvanney notes, entails the capacity to assimilate yet also to reject certain cultural norms, with existentialism granting individuals the ability to transcend existent developmental paradigms construction their identities (McILvanney 2000, 72).

In discussing Ernaux's work, McILvanney observes that her narrator recognizes oppression unnatural, yet succumbs to a state of immanence. While Ernaux stops short of radical existentialism, McILvanney argues that her work reflects de Beauvoir's acknowledgement that oppressive social realities can sometimes overpower individual agency, reducing freedom to mere potential possibility (McILvanney 2000, 72).

3.6 Gender in the Palestinian Context: The Twin Representational Failure of the Feminist Movement and the Palestinian Leadership

Butler asserts that "the mobilization of identity categories for politicization always remains threatened by the prospect of identity becoming an instrument of the power one opposes. That is no reason not to use and be used by identity. There is no political position purified of power, and perhaps that impurity is what produces agency as the potential interruption and reversal of regulatory regimes. Those deemed 'unreal'

nevertheless lay hold of the real, a laying hold that happens in concert, and a vital

instability is produced by that performative surprise"(Butler 1999, xxvi).

Butler also considers that the effectiveness, or maybe even the legitimacy, of

Feminism's representation of women, is undermined by its presumption of uniformity of

the subject of its advocacy—namely, women when that is untrue. Not only does viewing

women as, in Butler's words, a "seamless category" (Butler 1999, 7) leads to exclusion of

some -for example those who identify biologically as women-, but it also sows seeds of

division among women.

Like Feminism, the Palestinian leadership assumed its representation role by

attempting to mobilize identity categories. Not surprisingly, the leadership's desire to

represent all Palestinians initially led it to mobilize the most dominant component of the

Palestinian identity—namely, the deep sense of victimhood that sprang out of the Nakba.

While, narrowly speaking, it is understood to represent the dispossession and mass

expulsion of Palestinians that took place in 1948, the Nakba, more than anything else,

came to be emblematic of the colonial denial of their very existence as a people, first

enshrined in the 1917 Belfour Declaration and then relentlessly pursued by the Zionist

colonial enterprise in Palestine. Nor was it a coincidence that when the PLO was

established in 1964 as a symbolic home for all Palestinians, it led with a program that

prioritized the Palestinians' "right of return."

However, as the PLO started to prioritize the establishment of a Palestinian state

"on any liberated part" of Palestine, most notably first in its 1974 "ten-plank" program[94]

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[94] The Palestine Liberation Organization's Ten Point Plan, accepted by the Palestinian National Council at its 12th meeting in Cairo on June 8, 1974, called for the establishment of a national authority over any part of Palestinian territory that is liberated, with the ultimate aim of liberating all Palestinian territory. While it emphasized

and subsequently most undeniably in the context of its adoption in 1988 of the "Palestinian Peace Initiative," it set the stage for the fracture and division among Palestinians that ultimately occurred upon its signing, along with the government of Israel, the Oslo Declaration of Principles in 1993. The parallel between the loss of representational validity that Feminism sustained as it started to mobilize identity categories among women, on the one hand, and the similar fate suffered by the PLO as it began to move away from the most defining and unifying component of the Palestinian identity, on the other, is unmistakably clear. The parallel also obviously and tragically extends to the misplaced presumption of uniformity in representation (women for Feminism and the Palestinian people for the PLO). Moreover, in both cases, the act of representation became more about the representative than the represented.

One cannot but wonder whether, at least to some extent, a certain measure of expediency underlay the inflection that befell the trajectory of the struggle mounted by both Feminism and the Palestinian leadership. But, beyond the diagnosis, the larger question is: why did that happen in the first instance? Was it not evident that significant risks attached to underestimating the power of the constitutive parts of the category advocated for, with those risks being higher the greater the weight of a particular component in the overall makeup of the identity that is politicized and defended?

Arguably, both movements adopted and adapted their representation strategies based on a conscious determination to go for what the traffic bore. What they seem to have ignored or underestimated along the way, however, was the extent to which the rules

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armed struggle, the plan also allowed for diplomatic means, providing the basis for future compromises by the Palestinian leadership.

and the contours of the possible were laid and shaped by the oppressive patriarchy they set out to resist, with the result being ultimately akin to what Butler seems to have had in mind when she described conditions that lead to identity becoming "an instrument of the power one opposes." That appears to be what happened here as Feminism and Palestinian leadership undermined the most fundamental cause of the change they sought to effect—namely, the fulfillment by the subjects of their representation of their right to be free simply because of their humanness.

In the Palestinian context, women—and, more generally, Palestinians—found themselves not genuinely politically represented but instead enduring faux representation in a world of political fiction conjured up by Feminism and the Palestinian leadership. As they became self-absorbed, both Feminism and the leadership effectively prioritized political fiction and theater over genuine representation, thereby adding yet another layer of sad irony and tragic intrigue to the plight of the Palestinian people and, especially, to what it means to be or to become, a woman in a Palestine that is colonized by the Israeli occupation, partially ruled by a product of that occupation, and characterized by the dominance of a patriarchal societal order.

Fiction has its allure, if not mystique, but it is no substitute for effective representational advocacy. When their representation started to be undertaken within the confines of the boundaries set by an oppressive occupation regime, and when they found themselves practicing that representation in ways and by means that mirrored those of the oppressive occupation regime, Feminism and the Palestinian leadership sought to compensate for that apparent contradiction. This took the form of attempting to sustain and intensify their struggle against the occupation regime by expanding the scope of their

representation. However, in that process, they made their representation endeavor more about how much than about the "why and how" to represent. In effect, rather than trying to alter the "rules of the game," expanding the scope of representation ended up being another form of adaptation to the rules imposed by the power opposed.

This form of adaptation was in evidence when—realizing that prioritizing statehood on a portion of the Palestinians' ancestral land over their right of return, together with the coercive means adopted to ensure a continuation of its representational relevance, did not deliver statehood—the Palestinian leadership attempted to shift the focus back on the plight of Palestinian refugees. In 2002, this took the form of insisting on amending a Saudi peace initiative by including a reference to the need for a just resolution of the Palestinian refugee issue as a condition precedent for the normalization of Israel's relations with all Arab countries. So amended, the Saudi initiative was adopted by the Beirut Arab Summit. With that, it appeared that the Palestinians' right of return had made a triumphant comeback after many years of it having been relegated to the status of "an issue to be resolved in negotiations." However, a cursory reading of the amendment told a vastly different story. The text conditioned a "just resolution" of the refugee issue on it having to be agreed to by none other than the occupying power.

Ultimately, the colonial representational strategies of Feminism and the Palestinian leadership were highly consequential. Indeed, in what may be a unique manifestation of *palestinization*, both agents of change perhaps became just as indestructible as the political fiction they came to represent. Arguably, that happened once they opted for a representation strategy that, instead of being rooted in the right of the Palestinian women and men to be free simply because of their humanness, sought to

conform to the rules set by the colonial occupation and shaped by its norms, including those inspired by its modernity.

Sadly, an unholy trinity of patriarchal oppression emerged; a trinity comprised of the occupation, patriarchal societal structures, and the combination of Feminism and the Palestinian leadership. That trinity rendered Palestinian women the biggest loser in the Palestinian people's battle for existence.

What is urgently needed is the development of a distinctly Palestinian feminist movement—one that transcends the confines of both patriarchal and Western frameworks. Such a movement must critically engage with the unique reality of palestinization, understanding its pervasive influence on identity and representation. By addressing this dual challenge, Palestinian feminism can work toward liberating women not only from the structures of patriarchy but also from the lingering shadows of colonial and Western-centric paradigms.[95]

3.7 Identity Palestinized: a Struggle for Coping and Resisting

Butler confirms that "a great deal of feminist theory and literature has… assumed that there is a "doer" behind the deed. Without an agent, …there can be no agency and hence no potential to initiate a transformation of relations of domination within society" (Butler 1999, 33). This is tautologically true,[96] as no transformation can take place

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[95] Palestinian women's movements, much like Black Feminism, need to disentangle themselves from Western frameworks that fail to address their lived realities. To build a feminist movement capable of addressing the layered oppression faced by Palestinian women, there must be a deliberate incorporation of the unique conditions imposed by palestinization. This approach should prioritize the dual struggle against patriarchy and Western-dominated models of feminism, ensuring a liberation strategy that is rooted in local contexts and realities.

[96] The assertion that this is "tautologically true" refers to the logical understanding that agency—defined as the capacity to act—is inherently tied to the presence of an agent. Without an agent, there is no mechanism to enact change, making the statement self-evident within its own framework. However, from a situated perspective, Butler's

without a doer—an agent of change. The real question is: who is to assume agency in a struggle to break away from a situation produced and shaped by power asymmetries?

At its core, this is a question of identity.[97] But it is obviously a question that cannot be meaningfully addressed before addressing the goal of the desired transformation and the essence of the transformation process. Neither can it be adequately considered without reference to the context in which the transformation occurs.

In any context where injustice emerges as the natural outcome of exploiting power asymmetries, the ultimate goal becomes clear: to dismantle asymmetries and build a society grounded in equality. From an anarcha-feminist perspective, such as that advanced by Chiara Bottici, this requires addressing not only the external structures of domination but also the internalized systems of oppression that sustain them. In the Palestinian context, this means not only confronting and ending Israel's colonial occupation but also challenging any forms of oppression within Palestinian society itself-whether patriarchal norms, hierarchical governance models, or other forms of domination. As Bottici reminds us, "the tyrant is not only outside but also inside." The goal is not merely to replace one set of rulers with another but to envision and construct a

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observation gains critical relevance because women, particularly Black women and Indigenous women, have historically and structurally been denied agency. These groups have been systematically excluded from being recognized as "agents," both within patriarchal systems and colonial frameworks, rendering their struggles for transformation all the more complex and profound.

[97] Specifically, the identity that has been shaped and constrained by the lived realities of *palestinization. Palestinization* here refers to the condition where identity is forcibly molded by the colonial occupation, systematic dispossession, and the constant need to resist. In this sense, identity becomes not merely a cultural or personal construct but a political and existential one, defined by coping with oppression and asserting one's existence in the face of denial. What is being Palestinized is the very essence of agency itself, as Palestinians must navigate their identity within a framework of imposed victimhood and a perpetual struggle against forces that aim to erase or redefine their existence. This identity is thus a dynamic and contested terrain, shaped by the dual forces of oppression and resistance, making the question of who assumes agency inseparable from the broader struggle for liberation and recognition.

radically inclusive framework - one in which life is valued, inalienable individual rights are safeguarded, freedoms are guaranteed, and diversity is celebrated, with equality and dignity for all individuals. This would require a combination of dogged resistance to the occupation and perseverance in building up Palestinians' own-institutional capacity and governance capabilities. These two tracks are mutually reinforcing. Indeed, they are two sides of a single coin, with that being a political reality under which the humanness of the Palestinian people is not undermined or subjected to any form of violation.

Some may argue that the capacity-building component of this vision would amount to little more than an act of adapting to the reality of living under a permanent Israeli colonial occupation. However, rather than a form of adaptation, it is an instrument of coping with life demands under occupation, but within the framework of a fully integrated political vision. From an anarcha-feminist lens, this process is far from mere adaptation—it is an act of resistance in itself. As Bottici writes, "just do it" because "no site is ever too small to start," and even the smallest acts of rebellion—whether within households, neighborhoods, or broader communities—are "prefigurations of a different world" (Bottici 2022, 298). Bottici's notion of anarcha-feminism affirms the importance of resisting domination in ways that do not replicate oppressive structures, insisting that "to resist domination, we must do so in ways that do not replicate it" (Bottici 2022, 298). In this sense, capacity-building within the Palestinian context becomes not an accommodation to occupation, but a prefigurative practice that resists colonial domination while simultaneously fostering the foundations of a freer, more equitable

society, thus serving as the building blocks for a broader, transformative vision of liberation.[98]

A key organizing principle of that vision is: "cope to exist," for "to exist is to resist." That a modicum of normalcy is likely to emerge on the strength of the capacity-building component should not be a source of weakness or vulnerability. On the contrary, if pursued effectively, it will enhance the capacity of the Palestinian people to withstand the adversity of the occupation. It will fortify their staying power in the face of an occupation regime that has consistently sought to cancel and replace them. After all, this should be the intermediate target of any meaningful effort that is aimed at resisting the occupation on the way to ending it. Indeed, if anything, it will make an anomaly out of the occupation itself while normalizing the existence of the Palestinian people on their own land. Last but not least, it will *palestinize* the Palestinians' perception of a sense of shared identity by making that identity encompass not only a broadly shared feeling of injustice, but also, more importantly, the will and determination to resist it on the way to ending it.

That would be a considerable advance. For a national identity that is, in the main, deeply rooted in a collective sense of victimhood, is highly disempowering. Rather than inspire a can-do spirit, it will likely continue fostering submissiveness, defeatism, and counterproductive belligerence.

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[98] One could describe this process as "resilience," a concept often used to refer to tools or mechanisms for coping under oppressive systems such as occupation. However, resilience as a framework risks being depoliticized and reduced to a survival mechanism, obscuring its transformative potential. Within the Palestinian context, I argue that resilience is better understood as part of a larger process of Palestinization: the transformation of coping strategies into acts of defiance and political reclamation. Unlike passive resilience, which accepts the permanence of occupation, this approach envisions a future grounded in liberation and self-determination.

The question of Palestinian national identity has never been a straightforward proposition. It has been more of a story than a question or an issue. And for the Palestinians to assume full agency in their quest for freedom, as they must, leaving it to the colonial occupying power to define them by 'who they are not' or continuing to drown themselves in the misery of victimhood will simply not cut it.

For much too long, the simple question of "where do you come from?" has been, for a Palestinian, not so simple a question to answer. Almost invariably, the answer would turn into a long story if you happened to be a Palestinian resident of Jerusalem and an exceptionally long one if you happen to be a woman from Jerusalem.

For, at once, you are merely a resident of a city under Israeli occupation without being an Israeli citizen, you are a non-Palestinian Palestinian because if you were to get a Palestinian passport, you would lose the "privilege" of residency in Jerusalem and your Israeli-issued ID card would be immediately withdrawn. You are a non-Jordanian Jordanian because you, like most Jerusalemites, travel internationally on a Jordanian passport issued as a travel document, not as a right of citizenship. Add to these complications those associated with your surname not being a straightforward proposition if you are, or especially if you were once, a married woman.

As a woman who identifies as Palestinian, I recall my first encounter with a long moment of hesitation when, like other participants at an international conference, I had to identify myself and state where I came from. My agony with how I would answer escalated as my turn approached. Then, just in time, I thought to myself: why bother with a surname, or even a country affiliation, when you are a Jerusalemite? And in what

simultaneously felt like a eureka moment and, decidedly, an act of defiant coping, I said:

I am Nadia, and I am from Jerusalem.

3.8 Questioning Western Philosophy of Gender in Palestine: Culture or Imperialism?[99]

The condition that I termed *palestinization* in this essay is an anomalous state of existence akin to Borderlands life. This is a similarity that Gloria Anzaldúa invoked by her account of *mestizaje*[100] living experience. There is a parallel between what became of Palestinians after the Israeli occupation of Palestine in 1948, which resulted in the dispossession and expulsion of more than half the Palestinian population, on the one hand, and, in the people's life experience in the borderlands, on the other.

For, as Anzaldúa argues, "Borderlands are physically present wherever two or more cultures edge each other, where people of different races occupy the same territory,

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[99] The title reflects a methodological approach akin to María Lugones's seminal exploration of the coloniality of gender, as she interrogates the imposition of colonial gender systems through the framework of Aníbal Quijano's coloniality of power. Lugones writes: "The intent of this writing is to make visible the instrumentality of the colonial/modern gender system in subjecting us—both women and men of color—in all domains of existence" (*The Coloniality of Gender*, 2007). Here, I extend this critical lens to examine how Western philosophical constructions of gender intersect with the cultural and political realities in Palestine. However, my argument draws upon Gloria Anzaldúa's *Borderlands/La Frontera*, offering a framework to analyze marginalization and resistance at the intersection of colonial power and local identity. This approach is particularly relevant to Palestinian citizens inside Israel (1948 Palestinians), whose lived experiences closely mirror the *borderlands* model—a liminal space of oppression and creative resistance, where identities are continuously contested and reshaped amidst political and cultural boundaries. María Lugones, "The Coloniality of Gender," in *Feminisms in Movement: Theories and Practices from the Americas*, ed. Lívia De Souza Lima, Edith Otero Quezada, and Julia Roth (Bielefeld: Transcript Verlag, 2024), DOI:10.1515/9783839461020-002.

[100] *Mestizo* refers to individuals of mixed white European and Indigenous ancestry, common in Latin America due to the region's colonial history. It represents a significant portion of the population and highlights racial blending distinct from conventional U.S. racial categories. See Gonzalez-Barrera, Ana. "'Mestizo' and 'mulato': Mixed-race identities among U.S. Hispanics." Pew Research Center, July 10, 2015. https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2015/07/10/mestizo-and-mulatto-mixed-race-identities-among-u-s-hispanics/.

where under, lower, middle and upper classes touch, where the space between two individuals shrinks with intimacy"(Anzaldúa 1987, preface). One might think that the ensuing interaction would create and bring a unique cultural merger of different blends into the world. Unfortunately, it does not as the interactions are frequently shaped by systemic inequalities, cultural erasure, and the imposition of dominant narratives that suppress rather than blend diverse identities .The Borderlands woman that resulted in Anzaldúa's living reality created a life of compensation: "Living in borders and margins, keeping one's shifting and multiple identity and integrity, is like trying to swim in a new element, an 'alien element.'" (Anzaldúa 1987, preface). What I call "anomaly," Anzaldúa calls "alien element," a life that results in a "struggle of the Self amidst adversity and violation" (Anzaldúa 1987, preface). This indeed speaks to the similarity between the predicament of the Palestinian people living under Israeli occupation and the human condition of the Borderlands people.

A Borderlands culture was created on the U.S.-Mexican border, "where the Third World grates against the first and bleeds. And before a scab forms, it hemorrhages again, the lifeblood of two worlds merging to form a third country-a border culture." (Anzaldúa 1987, 245) That border which defines the existence of Anzaldúa and her people is unlike other borders that are usually set to determine the safety of places or to distinguish people and separate them into them and us. Borderlands is something else. It is a "vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary. It is a constant state of transition. The prohibited and forbidden are its inhabitants" (Anzaldúa 1987, 25). In the Borderlands, Anzaldúa states, live whom she calls *"Los atravesados"*: "the squint eyes, the perverse, the queer, the troublesome, the mongrel, the mulato, the

half-breed, the half- breed, the half dead; in short, those who cross over, pass over, or go through the confines of the 'normal'(Anzaldúa 1987, 25).

The parallel between this depiction by Anzaldúa of the "alien element" and mine of the "palestinized" is unmistakable. It does not matter if the inhabitants are with or without documents, of what skin color, *Chicanos*, Blacks, or Indians. "The only 'legitimate' inhabitants are those in power, the whites, and those who align themselves with whites"(Anzaldúa 1987, 25-26).

The *Chicanos*[101], after the victory of the U.S forces over the Mexicans in 1846, found themselves annexed by context along with the land. They were "locked into the fiction of white superiority, seized absolute power, stripping Indians and Mexicans of their land while their feelings were still rooted in it"(Anzaldúa 1987, 29). In her own words, Anzaldúa writes: "We were jerked out by the roots, truncated, disemboweled, dispossessed, and separated from our identity and history"(Anzaldúa 1987, 30).

In such situations, identity becomes a significant issue for *Chicanos* and Palestinians on Borderlands. It becomes a trigger to the very meaning of existence. In many ways, this identity creates a culture of its own—a culture that forms our beliefs. Thus, Anzaldúa explains: "we perceive the version of reality that it communicates. Dominant paradigms, predefined concepts that exist as unquestionable, unchallengeable, are transmitted to us through culture"(Anzaldúa 1987, 38). However, in the quest for identity, its formation, and preservation, Anzaldúa maintains that "those who make

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[101] The term "Chicano" became a symbol of pride for Mexican Americans during the Chicano Movement of the 1960s, led by figures such as Cesar Chavez, Rodolfo "Corky" Gonzales, and Dolores Huerta. The movement sought to combat social oppression and reclaim "Chicano" as a political and cultural identifier. See Gallardo, Miguel E. "Chicano." *Encyclopedia Britannica*, June 6, 2024. https://www.britannica.com/topic/Chicano.

culture are those in power. And those in power are men. Men make the rules and laws; women transmit them"(Anzaldúa 1987, 38).

The Israeli occupation of Palestine is similar to the American annexation of Mexican territories. What used to be Mexico became a part of the United States, just as what used to be Palestine became Israel.

In the case of colonial settler invasion, the trap set against people left on the land is identity. As the colonial settler power wants the land without the people, it doggedly pursues plans of systemic ethnic cleansing. A power relation is instantly imposed: a master and an enslaved person; the power of the white-colored race over any other color as if colors stain the purity of the white.

There is a clear parallel between the experiences of Israeli Arabs and *Chicanos* with settler Colonialism. One can relate to every aspect of what Borderlands people share in the narrative: a narrative of dispossession, ethnic cleansing, poverty, economic dependence, social destruction, and language deformation.

Amid all this stands the identity. The struggle to maintain an identity of one's race is a constant battle on a difficult journey to survival. How would one think of his identity when he can barely grasp a breath of life to survive? Survive a life that surrounds you with impossibilities, separates your movement from borders, cuts you from your family, restricts your natural rights, and denounces your language. To survive, you need to know the language of your oppressor. The language of those in power. Those who control all resources, resources of your breath.

On that journey, language falls victim to survival. In the wake of some rest, people realize that to maintain identity, you must keep your tongue. Palestinians realized

that faster than *Chicanos*. By the 1970s, Palestinians inside Israel had recognized the importance of preserving their Palestinian roots by ensuring that Arabic was not wiped away by the Hebrew language. By that time, numerous Arabic dialects were washed with Hebrew words. People mixed half of their sentences with Hebrew. The movement toward a Palestinian identity continued, but Hebrew was already like the stepmother language.

I remember attending about two decades ago a seminar organized by some "Israeli Arab" friends about education in the Israeli Arab communities. I recall being fascinated by how far my organizer friends had made it in the Israeli educational system. There they were in the elegant auditorium of the van Leer Institute arguing, presenting, and discussing Arab schools' academic problems in Hebrew. A handful in front of almost all-Arab audiences with a Jewish Israeli moderator.

At that moment, I thanked God for living under occupation as a Jerusalemite. I went home and drafted an essay: "Not only had they occupied the land, but also the tongues"(Harhash 2014). Unfortunately, twenty years later, land and language in Jerusalem are as occupied.

I always believed that knowing the enemy's language is strength. But the difference between knowing the language to see the enemy and building your strategies to free yourself from the enemy's chain is one thing, and indulging in drowning in the enemy is another.

The cultural differences between "us" and "them" never go away because we see them as outsiders, invaders, occupiers, and thieves. They see us as lesser people, enslaved people, goyim, laborers, ignorant, and unworthy. Our culture became an exotic encounter

to their anarchists over time, and their culture became a class-mounting endeavor to our elites.

As a Palestinian, and after living under occupation all my life, I don't know life but under occupation. But I still don't know much about the culture of the Israelis. Is it true that they don't have a specific culture, as is alleged about the Americans who settled in the US? I don't have the curiosity to find an answer. I don't care much about their culture. All that I see is occupation.

Unlike "Arab Israelis" or *Chicanos*, I live under the *palestinization* effect, and in this sense, *palestinization* sounds better than the aforementioned characterizations. The massacre of identity through language is nothing but the impact of the actual deforming of what became an identity—a Borderlands individual who struggles to put his finger on what forms him. Cut in different pieces of many languages, cultures, colors, and a race that define him. Pretending a new product of identity that includes the oppressor, colonial, or settler as part of what defines him: English or Hebrew, it doesn't matter. The result is a deformed identity that is new.

3.9 Palestinization and the Anomaly of Identity

Unlike putting pieces of embroidery together to form one piece of art, such identities are like scattered art, an art that reflects itself in tools and images of the "other" to produce "us." Instead of being part of what Donna Haraway calls "woven of social relation, which has a class, gender, culture, species, and biological context, as well as a methodological context, it is woven of layers and has no core"(Haraway 1986).

In a fundamental way, Haraway's "missing core" is a hallmark of a deformed identity. Even where it is not completely missing, that core ends up being blurred by some overriding contextual factors, like living under occupation in the Palestinian context, to the point where such factors begin to be seen not only as key defining elements of the identity, but also unifying themes in the advocacy for rights, in much the same way Feminism relied on gender-based advocacy in the struggle for women's rights. Historically, in the absence of an analysis that is informed by a String-figuring of all key factors that bear on the formation of identity, and on deforming it, the struggle for rights has stumbled badly.

The Palestinian Authority's failed effort to incorporate the provisions of CEDAW[102] in the body of Palestinian law might be a good illustration of the difficulties involved here. For one thing, in that effort, the Palestinian feminist organizations excluded the figures in their normative and cognitive ensembles. For a woman does not necessarily resemble all women. More likely, she does not live, go through, or experience the lives of other women. Thus, these organizations acted as if the Palestinian society was comprised of one class that they represented, and as if that class was a homogeneous monolith.

On the other hand, the Palestinian sour experience with trying to make CEDAW the law of the land virtually completely ignored the fact that the norms that informed the promulgation of CEDAW represented, to borrow from Haraway, a "[m]odernist Western situated knowledge… dominated by a male vision set in an Enlightenment frame, which sees the "other" as a lesser version of itself. Thus, the Enlightenment also contributed to

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[102] The Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women is an international treaty adopted in 1979 by the United Nations General Assembly.

the colonialist mentality, which says that indigenous peoples cannot speak for themselves; they must be told for and represented"(Haraway cited by Mambrol 2018).

What the Palestinian Authority and feminist organizations should have done instead was "… to invent their own stories while at the same time scrutinizing those which have become part of accepted wisdom and a substitute for truth, those, in short, which are ideologically inflected but appear as essential truths"(Haraway cited by Mambrol 2018).

That may be why for many Palestinian women, in the name of protection of the culture, religion, or tribe, the choice was to submit to the role of victims. In many ways, it was safer to be a victim and blame the other; the other who comes alongside occupation: the father, mother, brother, and husband; that other who controls the uncertainty of our living. Women seek "home" and protection of the collective rather than the law imposed by the "other—the occupier, the West, and the white.

I believe that is why Palestinian women went along with the fight against CEDAW. They did because, like Anzaldúa, they may not "buy all the myths of the tribe into which they were born"(Anzaldúa 1987, 44). "They can understand why the more tinged with Anglo blood, the more adamantly my colored and colorless sisters glorify their colored cultures' values to offset the extreme devaluation of it by the white culture. It is a legitimate reaction"(Anzaldúa 1987, 44). However, unlike Anzaldúa, most women continue to "glorify those aspects of culture that have injured us in the name of protecting us"(Anzaldúa 1987, 44).

In the end, CEDAW was seen as a Western import that threatened the Palestinian social order, a product of a hegemonic Western ideology that was not about to understand the culture of the "other" and accept being tolerant towards it.

Sadly, this gap of understanding persists, and it is deeply rooted.

Conclusion

No one today is purely one thing. Labels like Indian, or woman, or Muslim, or American are not more than starting-points, which if followed into actual experience for only a moment are quickly left behind. Imperialism consolidated the mixture of cultures and identities on a global scale. But its worst and most paradoxical gift was to allow people to believe they were only, mainly, exclusively, white, or Black, or Western, or Oriental. Yet just as human beings make their own history, they also make their cultures and identities. Survival, in fact, is about the connections between things... It is more rewarding—and more difficult—to think concretely and sympathetically about others than only about 'us.' But this also means not trying to rule others, classify them, or put them in hierarchies.

—Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism*

This dissertation set out to critically assess the adequacy of traditional philosophical canons for addressing the enduring social injustices faced by marginalized groups, particularly women. Through an examination of patriarchal and matriarchal structures, Arab Eastern philosophy, and the effects of Colonial-Modernity on identity, this research has highlighted the limitations associated with ascribing the persistence of the marginalization of minorities to the dominance of patriarchy and Western orientation in philosophy and advocated for an inclusive, context-sensitive approach to philosophical inquiry.

The first chapter of this dissertation has laid the groundwork for an approach aimed at understanding and addressing the root causes of women's marginalization. It argues for the importance of focusing on contextual factors that can help bridge gaps in our understanding of the status of oppressed minorities, particularly women. By emphasizing the need to contextualize scientific inquiry, I aim to show that such an approach can effectively complement what would otherwise be a pursuit of knowledge grounded in abstract notions of objectivity or neutrality. Rather than being truly neutral,

such abstract approaches often serve to perpetuate existing power imbalances and, consequently, social injustice.

My analysis highlights the importance of adopting a broader perspective in debates surrounding the perceived inadequacy of philosophical canons for addressing the injustices faced by women. Specifically, it questions the assumption that these canons are inherently patriarchal, suggesting that the concept of patriarchy itself may not be as clearly defined as is often presumed. While biology may define maleness, this does not necessarily equate to manliness in a way that uniformly supports the existence of a purely patriarchal philosophical framework. In other words, the idea that philosophical traditions are inherently and uniformly patriarchal may warrant further scrutiny, as the connection between maleness and patriarchy is not as straightforward as it might seem.

The discussion in the first chapter also highlights that this line of reasoning should prompt us to question the usefulness of attempting to replace a loosely defined concept with what is perceived to be its opposite. If the original concept is nebulous, its opposite is likely to be equally unclear. Therefore, if the former holds limited value as a source of philosophical guidance, the latter should not be presumed to offer much more.

I argue that it is in this sense that serious potential flaws may attach to postulating the existence of a matriarchal approach and asserting its superiority to the patriarchal order as presumed to exist in philosophy—for the purposes of dealing with the prejudice toward women. Nevertheless, the examination of this and similar hypotheses served the useful purpose of laying bare the pitfalls that are inherent to thinking that there are easy answers to questions related to human behavior. It, therefore, also highlighted the need to adopt an approach to philosophical inquiry and discourse that is inclusive and

encompassing of fundamentally differing perspectives, especially those of the marginalized.

In addition, such an examination, as I point out, opens the door for questioning not only the adequacy of the philosophical canons themselves, but also the effectiveness of their application. This, in turn, could usefully lead to shifting the focus of inquiry to a consideration of the role played by agents of change in the quest for eliminating the prejudice toward women.

My analysis reveals that the formation and perpetuation of prejudice against women and other minorities involves far more complexity than can be explained by simply attributing such bias to the gender or geographical orientation of knowledge or philosophical canons, even if one could speak unequivocally of a binary existence of patriarchal-matriarchal and West-East orientations in philosophy.

While these orientations may play a role in shaping how philosophers think, it would be an overstatement to claim they entirely determine thought processes or the accumulation of knowledge. Instead, they operate within a broader framework of multi-directional interactions with other, often interrelated, influences. These influences are filtered through the dispositions and perspectives of individual thinkers, philosophers, and agents of change. Throughout this dissertation, I argue that such influences collectively shape thinkers' perspectives—not necessarily or exclusively through their impact on gender identity.

It was in this context that I postulated the existence of a manliness-womanliness continuum along which men and women are variably situated depending on their respective mix of these two traits, with the latter shaped largely by cultural influences and

contextual considerations. This construction, it may be recalled, serves the useful purpose of bridging the gap between feminist philosophers who maintain that gender identity is performative and those who consider that gender is biologically determined.

The analysis in the first chapter set the stage for making the case for the adoption of a multi-pronged approach to the study of minority issues for the purpose of elaborating strategies aimed at the attainment of more inclusive societies. As I argue in the first two chapters, adopting the String-figuring paradigm would serve that purpose. For not only does it shift the focus of inquiry away from the question of whether a particular orientation of philosophical cannons is superior to others, but it more usefully highlights the importance of an examination of how a multitude of relevant factors interact to determine and shape the existing reality of the perennial existence of "the threatening other." This would be key to any effort aimed at bringing about a sense of togetherness that is rooted in the recognition of the humanness of all people rather than the lesser goal of equality as the overriding organizing principle in the pursuit of societal harmony and inclusion.

This, I believe, captures the essence of what a truly matriarchal approach to philosophy should embody—an incubator of knowledge and a crucible for its accumulation through the interaction of diverse perspectives, each shaped by individual thinkers' identities and lived experiences.

In the second chapter, the analysis was inspired by the dehumanization migrants from the East face in the West, and it considered whether Arab Eastern philosophy could be usefully deployed to shed some light on this phenomenon, and on the more general question of the seemingly inevitable existence of the marginalized "other."

Rather than examining the question of whether one could speak of the existence

of Arab Eastern philosophy in the abstract, I thought it might be best to do so by an

examination of how Muslim and Arab thinkers of the Muslim Golden Era dealt with the

notion of "otherness" as embodied in Qur'ânic text. Underlying my choice of this

approach was the enormous extent to which *Islam* had influenced and constrained these

thinkers' thought processes. Such an examination revealed the considerable depth with

which Arab thinkers dealt with such fundamental issues as those related to questions

about the essence of human nature. I would argue that, by itself, this attests to the

existence of Arab philosophy.

This is not to say that Arab philosophy, or Eastern philosophy in general, can be

viewed as distinct enough in the sense of it not having been influenced by Western

philosophical discourse as to, by itself, provide an adequate analytical framework within

which the West's minoritization of migrants from the East can be fundamentally

addressed. And, just as I argued in the first chapter on the minoritization of women, the

seemingly inevitable existence of the threatening other in virtually all forms of social

organization lies at the heart of the marginalization of minorities.

With that in mind, I sought to find a plausible explanation in Arab thought for the

emergence and existence of "otherness." That led me to argue that the marginalization of

the "other" is owed in large measure to the existence—real or perceived—of

differentness, especially the cultural or civilizational manifestation of it.

As to the tension in East-West discourse and the long-running debate about the

reality of a cultural and civilizational gap between the two, the critique of Orientalism

covered in the second chapter proved useful for providing some insight into possible

explanations. One of those—namely, the role played by the Arab bourgeois class as a facilitator of, and accelerator in, the denigration of Arab culture and heritage served as a segue to the discussion in chapter 3 on Colonial-Modernity.

In the third chapter, I explored the impact of Colonial-Modernity on Palestinian identity, drawing parallels between the Palestinian experience and broader *Borderlands* experiences. Central to this chapter was the concept of *palestinization*, which describes the condition of Palestinians under Israeli occupation as an anomalous state akin to *Borderlands* life. The chapter highlighted how identity and language are manipulated under oppressive regimes, contributing to the persistence of social injustice. It argued for the importance of resisting these manipulations and reclaiming identity as a means of empowerment and resistance against oppression.

Throughout this dissertation, the exploration of identity has demonstrated that cultural, social, and geopolitical contexts play a crucial role in shaping philosophical discourse. Identity is not a static or isolated concept; it is deeply intertwined with lived experiences, power structures, and historical contexts. By examining identity through lenses such as Standpoint theory, Situated Knowledges, Intersectionality and Borderlands discourse, this research reveals that philosophical canons must account for the diverse and often marginalized perspectives that inform our understanding of justice and human experience. This approach leads to a more nuanced and comprehensive understanding of social justice, where the voices and experiences of those on the margins are not just included but central to the discourse.

In the way the concept of *palestinization* was introduced and elaborated in the third chapter, one can readily see it as an application, in the Palestinian context, that flows naturally from deploying such a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the root causes of, and the

interplay of factors that bear on, the widely shared, deep sense of injustice among Palestinians. Factoring into the analysis the patriarchal social order that is prevalent in Palestine served as a useful analytical tool for understanding the depth of the plight of Palestinian women in particular. Specifically, I argue that, much like a minority group within a larger minority class, Palestinian women are especially wronged by the dual incidence of injustice that is simultaneously inflicted by the Israeli colonial occupation and the Palestinian patriarchal social order. Thus, in this construction, the plight of Palestinian women is an extreme manifestation of *palestinization.*

More generally, the elaboration of the concept of *palestinization*, including the suggestion I make about its applicability beyond the Palestinian context, is a significant takeaway from my analysis. Indeed, such a construction provides a useful analytical framework for understanding the power relations involved in the study of the interaction between gender, identity, and both internal as well as external forces of oppression and subjugation.

Other contributions of this dissertation include bringing into a sharper focus the colonial representational failures on the part of the agents of change in the effort aimed at redressing the injustice endured by women and other minorities. Without laying a claim to the adequacy of traditional philosophical canons for informing the formulation of policies aimed at redressing injustice, my analysis has usefully suggested that the representational failures in question may have had more to do with the persistence of social injustice than the alleged inadequacy of the philosophical canons.

This dissertation has also validated the existence of Arab Eastern philosophy by tracing the situatedness of the concept of *differentness*, including the cultural and civilizational manifestation of it, in Arab and Muslim thought. Postulating that the existence of differentness,

or the perception thereof, tends to underlie the formation of societal faultlines that give rise to the emergence of "otherness" usefully shifts the focus of the discourse away from whether or not the traditional philosophical canons are adequate for redressing the marginalization of women to a consideration of the enormous value of adopting a multipronged approach that actively seeks to include women's perspectives and experiences in the formation of societal norms. Such, I argue, would be a path that holds the promise for women to attain the full rights and privileges that derive from their humanness.

This conclusion is perhaps best captured in Edward Said's advocacy for a humanist approach to dealing with scourge of otherness. In his words, "Humanism is the only—I would go so far as saying the final—resistance we have against the inhumane practices and injustices that disfigure human history." (Said 1978, xxiii)

Epilogue

Little I knew when I embarked on this research project journey some four years ago that as I approached the finish line I would be experiencing anything but fatigue and a tantalizing promise of exhilaration. Instead, it was a deep sense of wrenching guilt that permeated every facet of my life, particularly as I laboriously worked over the past year on fine-tuning my arguments and, most recently, on ensuring that even minor matters of form were in order. The thought never left my mind that there I was trying to do all of these things in pursuit of a purely personal endeavor while scores of Palestinian men, women, and children were being—as they most tragically continue to be—slaughtered daily.

It is true that I never experienced life but under a colonial occupation that, from its early inception days, presumed that Palestinians did not exist, certainly not as a people. And, as or when we begged to differ, we were spared no conceivable form of oppression, form dispossession to deportation; from arrest to home demolishing; and from siege to outright elimination.

It is also true that, one generation after another, we learned to live with the injustice of all of this oppression. To be sure, we, from time to time, rose in rebellion and resisted, and, throughout, we learned to cope; we persevered while also finding refuge in the pursuit personal goals; we harbored little sense of guilt when celebrating personal success; and we even engaged in building institutions of self-government.

Such was the state of what might be called the Palestinian normal until October of 2023, when, in the aftermath of a Palestinian attack, Israel launched a massive war of retribution that quickly turned into a war of annihilation. Yes, Gaza has since completely shattered that modicum

of normalcy. The immediate Palestinian victims are undoubtedly those of us who are (or were) there. But we individually and collectively own the pain and torment of it. And, to that should be added the deep sense of guilt felt by those of us who are not there for not being there.

It is against this backdrop that I struggled, especially over the past year, to find the time and focus needed to complete a task as demanding as writing a dissertation in philosophy. And, truth be told, I feel no sense of accomplishment, much less euphoria, as I write these final words of it. How can I when the sights and sounds of death and suffering have become so inseparably intertwined with my soul?

Indeed, how can anyone become desensitized to the sights and sounds of obliterated children, children—of whom too many orphaned—looking for something to eat and bending under a tractor to catch a few drops of water, wailing parents, or the sights and sounds of scratchy-voiced, bitterly weeping children suffering the pain of injury or mourning the loss of siblings and peers? And, here we are at the cusp of a second winter season with most Gazans living in tents that can hardly withstand a rain storm, much less protect against cold weather.

Maybe there will come a time—hopefully soon—when I am able to reflect on this seemingly eternal moment in my life with a sense of satisfaction for all the investment I have made in bringing this chapter of my pursuit of scholarship to a close; for having acquired so much knowledge; and for having, however modestly, contributed in that process to advancing the frontier in humanity's pursuit of social justice and dignity for all. Right now, however, the reality is that the main salvation I aspire to find lies not in getting this dissertation across the finish line for the sake of it, but for affording me the time to sink deeper in my grief and drown myself in tears.

Jerusalem, 25 Novemeber, 2024

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In the development if this dissertation, I used **ChatGPT** in order to **assist with language improvement**. Following its use, I carefully reviewed and revised the content as needed. I take full responsibility for the final content of this work.

OpenAI. *Creative Writing Coach* (powered by GPT-4). OpenAI, 2024. https://chat.openai.com/.

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