

Islamic Civilization in Orientalist Consciousness: A Philosophical Reading of Gustave Le Bon's Thought



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Abstract:

This study addresses the epistemological issues related to the representation of the "civilizational other" in Western thought, through an analysis of the image of Islamic civilization in Orientalist consciousness. It is an analytical study of the thought of Gustave Le Bon, a nineteenth-century European thinker. The study focuses on how Le Bon presented his conceptions of Islamic civilization, relying on a psychological and social approach to interpret the manifestations of its historical development. The study seeks to analyze the cognitive backgrounds that guided Le Bon's writings and explore his representations of Islam and Muslims within the context of modern Western thought. The study adopts a critical analytical approach to link the content of the discourse and its position within the general field of Orientalism. The study concludes that Le Bon's conception combines recognition of the achievements of Islamic civilization with framing it within a specific historical vision, which allows for a deeper understanding of the representation of the "other" in modern European thought.

key words: Orientalism, Islamic Civilization, Gustave Le Bon, Epistemology, Representation

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1-Introduction:

Islamic civilization is recognized as one of the most important civilizations that shaped human history, which was due to the scientific, intellectual, and cultural impact it made upon the East and West, and the fact that it had a vast impact both East and West, including the writings of the West, especially in the discipline of Orientalism where Muslims as well as Islam and their civilization received attention.

Also, in this context, we note the name of Gustave Le Bon, (and to a certain degree Arthur Gobineau,) the French Orientalist, who was different from most orientals as he was very open in his admiration of the dignity of Arabs and Muslims and mentioned their achievements in numerous fields, including in his work *The Civilization of the Arabs*, where he attempted to do justice to, and elevate the civilization of Arabs to the level of the other great civilizations.

While Orientalist discourse has taken a variety of forms, from explicit colonial tendencies to systematic intellectual contemplation, the attitude towards Islamic civilization has continued to be influenced by Western thought, which produces the binary of the "backward East" and the "advancing West". Gustave Le Bon offers a distinctive model in this regard. His approach is significant because he recognized some achievements of Islamic civilization, but had a belief in an evolutionary framework that put the West in the expected "pole" of the history of humanity. From this arises the central question of this study: How did Gustave Le Bon represent Islamic civilization within his intellectual framework, and to what extent does his perspective reflect genuine epistemic fairness or a reproduction of the foundational assumptions of Orientalist discourse? This central issue gives rise to several subsidiary questions, including: What psychological and social foundations did Le Bon rely on in his analysis of Islamic civilization? How are elements of bias or recognition reflected in his discourse? And where does his vision fit within the major trajectories of Orientalist consciousness in the 19th century?

This study will attempt to approach and analyze the image of Islamic civilization presented by Gustave Le Bon within the larger concern of Orientalist discourse. This study will identify the key characteristics of the method Le Bon utilized to frame Islam and place it amongst the critical class of Orientalist narratives. Furthermore, it will examine the objectivity of his view and its influence on how Islam and Muslims are perceived in European consciousness.

2 - The Concept of Orientalism:

If we refer to Arabic language dictionaries and search for the term “istishrāq” (Orientalism), we will not find it in this exact form. However, some scholars trace it back to the root “sharq” (east). The verb sharaqa, yashruqu, shurūqan means “the sun rose,” and the noun mashriq refers to the place of sunrise. Tashrīq means to head east, while sharqū indicates “they went to or have come from the East”(Ibn Manẓūr, 1988, p. 303). Professionally, istishrāq comes

from the term *sharq*, which means east or the direction of sunrise. The “ist-” prefix means a request or pursuit, so *istishrāq* denotes the pursuit or study of anything concerning the East (Fawzi, 1998, pp. 29–30).

For this reason, researchers interested in Orientalist studies agree that the term *istishrāq* (Orientalism) is a modern word derived from the verb *istashraqa*. In modern Arabic dictionaries, we find: *istashraqa*, *yastashriqu*, *istishrāqan*—meaning “a European became interested in Eastern studies,” that is, pursued knowledge of the East and its languages. The Orientalist movement refers to the trend among Western writers toward engaging with the heritage and civilization of the East. The equivalent term in French is *Orientalisme*, which refers to Western studies concerned with the civilizations, religions, history, and languages of Eastern peoples—particularly Arab-Islamic civilization (Dawood, 2006, p. 120).

Orientalism can also be defined based on the term's technical meaning, which refers to a turning toward the East. The expression *istashraqa* means “he turned toward the East” or “became affiliated with it.” The word *istishrāq* (Orientalism) thus signifies the pursuit of Eastern knowledge, interest in its study, and specialization in its understanding. As for the *Orientalist*, this term refers to anyone who specializes in the study and research of the East's knowledge, civilization, sciences, and arts. The term was first used in 1630 to describe a member of the Eastern Church, and was later applied to anyone who mastered Eastern languages and specialized in the philology of Eastern languages (Al-Nabhani, 2012, p. 11).

As for its meaning among Orientalists, it varies from one scholar to another. The German Orientalist Rudi Paret (1901–1983) considered that it carries two connotations. The first is that it is a science primarily concerned with philology. The second is that it is the science of the East, since it is derived from the word “East.” Accordingly, Orientalism is understood as the science of the Eastern world (Paret, 2011, p. 17).

The early beginnings of Orientalism were focused on the interest in the human and cultural relations between the Eastern and Western worlds. This was done by studying languages, arts, and even the customs and religious beliefs of the East, with the aim of understanding the stages of human intellectual development and the connections between the two worlds through the civilizational transition from one to the other. Over time, the concept of Orientalism evolved and became associated with the interest of certain Western researchers and scholars in Islamic and Arabic studies. Edward Said clarifies what Orientalism means in his book “Orientalism” when he states: “Orientalism is not

just a subject or a political field that reflects negatively in culture, research, and institutions. It is not a large and widespread collection of texts about the East, nor is it a representation of a sinister Western imperialist conspiracy to keep the Eastern world in its place. Rather, it is a distribution of geopolitical awareness into aesthetic, research, economic, social, historical, and linguistic texts. It is a framework not only for a fundamental geographical distinction but also for a full range of interests that Orientalism does not merely create, but also maintains, using means such as research discovery, linguistic analysis, and psychoanalysis.” (Said, 2005, p. 46)

We also find the Italian Orientalist Michel Angelo Gudi (1886–1940), a specialist in Arabic language and Islamic religion, who believes that Orientalism is nothing more than a reflection of Western colonialism. He describes it as “*the means of studying how mutual influence between the East and the West works, but it is also 'the science of the East'...* The science of the East is nothing but a door into the history of the human spirit.” (Smailović, 1998, p. 25).

Gudi contends that Orientalism is not only an academic or intellectual domain; it is also a textual representation process and is, therefore, a representational process influenced by political and cultural considerations. The East is frequently portrayed as a space that is only intelligible through the use of Western scalar frameworks that depict it as a strange and backward region of the world that is not akin to the West's envisioned ideals of modernity and progress. Extrapolated, Orientalism is a way of justifying and allowing Western hegemony and power over Eastern cultures at both cognitive and cultural levels. Gudi draws attention to how Orientalism intervened and transformed the cultural identity of the East, revealing that the West usually constructs its representation of the East using its own subjective representations and ignoring the cultural and intellectual diversity present in the East.

As for the French Orientalist Maxime Rodinson, he believes that the word *Orientalism* is a relatively recent term in Western linguistic dictionaries. The word *Orientalist* appeared in English around 1779, while the term *Orientalism* entered the French language dictionary in 1838. At this point, the interest in studying the East began to occupy a significant space in the writings of the 18th century (Smailović, 1998, pp. 24–25).

Thus, his definition of Orientalism comes within a critical framework, where he did not limit it to being an academic study of the East, but instead focused on critiquing Western Orientalist practices that aimed to understand the East through a colonial perspective. In his famous book “*Orientalism*”, he considered it not merely a scientific study but part of a colonial process in which

knowledge was used to justify Western dominance over the East. He also pointed out that Orientalism aimed to create an image of the East that differed from reality, an image that portrayed it as the "other," strange and primitive, thus helping to reinforce colonial and political concepts in the West. He viewed it as a tool to expand Western influence in the East, and this affected how Westerners understood the Islamic and Arab worlds, often ignoring many of the true cultural and social details. Therefore, it can be said that Rodinson linked Orientalism to Western dominance and believed that Middle Eastern and Islamic studies should be more objective and critical in evaluating traditional Western perceptions of the East.

From these definitions, we understand that Orientalism as a concept carries two meanings: On one hand, it is a science that specializes in the study of language and everything related to it; on the other hand, it is the science of the East, or a field that deals with everything the East has produced in terms of civilization, language, literature, art, philosophy, history, sciences, religion, and more. This concept has also evolved through various stages, but we must also understand how Arab thinkers have understood Orientalism. For example, Ahmed Hassan al-Zayyat views Orientalism as the study of Western scholars of the history of the East and its nations through their languages, literature, sciences, customs, beliefs, and even myths. With Malik Ben Nabi, Orientalism takes a broader definition. He sees it as all Western studies concerned with Islamic civilization and Islamic thought. He classifies them according to different periods and general perspectives regarding their views on Islam and Islamic civilization in its sciences, arts, and literature. Regarding time, there is the category of the ancients, with Thomas Aquinas mentioned as an example, and the category of modern scholars, with Goldziher cited as an example of this group. As for the general perspective or view these scholars had on Islam, Muslims, and their intellectual contributions, he sees two categories: the first consists of those who viewed this civilization with fairness and did not deny its rights, while the second consists of critics who worked to distort it (Smailović, 1998, pp. 27–29).

In the perspective provided by Malik Ben Nabi's works, Orientalism exists as a cognitive and intellectual phenomenon that is two-fold: an western cognitive engagement with the east and a culture-ideological means of maintaining western supremacy. Based on this analysis, Ben Nabi argues that Orientalism was not just a study of Eastern cultures but also a tool for shaping a negative stereotype of the East. This stereotype reinforced the hypothesis of Western superiority over the East, in addition to presenting a distorted image created by Orientalists that

reflected rigid and primitive frameworks of the East, contributing to the entrenchment of Western values as the standard of progress and civilization. Ben Nabi goes on to argue that Orientalism highlights a clash between two civilizations, one attempting to reassemble its identity through a self-definition of its own culture, and the other trying to reconstruct that identity based on its own political and cultural interests. Ben Nabi's insights put the emphasis of Orientalism solidly into the "power and knowledge," as posed by philosopher Michel Foucault, where knowledge becomes a mechanism of domination. It is not just for Ben Nabi, an academic study, or field of inquiry, it is a colonial cultural project to reorganize systems of knowledge and exercise control over cultural identities.

3 . Representations of Islamic Civilization in the Work of Gustave Le Bon

3 .1. The Islamic Conquest: Liberation or Invasion?

The significance of Islamic civilization in the works of Gustave Le Bon is prominent, particularly in his well-known treatise *The Civilization of the Arabs*, which is usually considered a relative break from the mundane hostile Orientalism. All of the admiration in the book is infused with stereotypical elements. The language of Le Bon also reflects a semantic duality, which oscillates between rational admiration for the accomplishment of Muslims and the phraseological vestiges of inert Orientalist discourse, which had very firmly established Western civilization vis-à-vis any notion of superiority and dominance.

The reasons that led him to write about Islamic civilization and the civilization of the Arabs stem from his clear interest in civilizations as a whole. Through his research on the development of societies during his various travels, he observed that the Arab civilization has distinctive features that set it apart from other civilizations. He also observed that awareness and knowledge of it can greatly benefit researchers who are interested in it. All of this is stressed in his *Landmark Publishing The History of Arab Civilization*, where he says "The more we study Arab civilization, their scientific books, their inventions and the arts, the more new facts and wide horizons keep opening before us. We soon find that the Arabs have contributed more to Medieval knowledge of the ancient sciences than any other, and there has never been a awesome nation produced what occurred in such a short span of time, and no one better at it artistically." (Le Bon, 1979, p. 32).

Le Bon describes the Islamic conquests as "the least bloody conquests in history," and he tends to present them as a civilizing movement rather than one of violence and destruction, thus contradicting the stereotypical image prevailing in

European discourse. However, despite this, he does not conceal his perception of the "emotional" nature of the Arabs, which creates an implicit contradiction in his analysis.

Le Bon shows us in his book the tolerance of Islam towards other religions through the justice of Muslims in their conquests. He also mentions that the tolerance of the Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, was extended to Jews and Christians, a tolerance that we did not witness in previous religions. Although a few Western scholars have acknowledged this tolerance in their writings, and in Le Bon's view, they are the scholars who have given careful thought to the history of the Arabs, he presents some excerpts of their statements as evidence of his claims.

For instance, Robertson, in his book *The History of Charlemagne*, stated that the Muslims were the only ones who combined zeal for their religion with a spirit of tolerance towards the followers of other religions. While they spread their faith with the sword, they allowed those who did not wish to embrace it to freely adhere to their own religious teachings. Similarly, we find the scholar Michoud in his book *The History of the Crusades* affirming that Islam commanded jihad but was very tolerant of the followers of other religions. The Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, prohibited the killing of monks because they were men of religion. Moreover, we find that Omar ibn al-Khattab, during his conquest of Jerusalem, did not harm the Christians, despite the fact that these same Christians had shed Muslim blood many times during their Crusades, particularly when they entered Jerusalem (**Le Bon, 1979, p. 22**). He even laments in many sections of his book *The Civilization of the Arabs* about the morals and behavior of his people when they entered Jerusalem and the horrific massacres they committed against the Muslims, who numbered sixty thousand, all of whom were exterminated in eight days, with no exceptions for the elderly, the sick, children, or women. These are facts that history acknowledges and are recounted by a fair-minded Orientalist who acknowledges the Islamic civilization.

The tolerance of the Islamic religion and the gentleness of the conquerors towards the peoples did not only extend to granting them full freedom to practice their religious rituals but went beyond that by providing them with justice and respect. They imposed a simple jizyah (tax) compared to the exorbitant taxes that the Romans had imposed before them. This treatment is what led many workers to embrace Islam, seeking refuge from the oppression and harshness of the Byzantine emperors' governors. Le Bon affirms that the Islamic conquests differ greatly from the later conquests. They are characterized by a unique quality not

found in all other peoples who conquered cities around the world. He mentions the example of the barbarians who took control of many Roman world states, as well as the Turks and others. Despite establishing great states immortalized by history, these states lacked the most important thing: civilization. Instead, they resorted to the civilization of the conquered states to benefit from it. In contrast, the Arabs were the ones who established civilization and carried many nations to adopt their religion, language, and civilization (**Le Bon, 1979, p. 220**).

When the Mongols entered Baghdad in 1258, they entered as destructive invaders, killing the Abbasid Caliph Al-Musta'sim Billah by strangulation. They also burned all the scientific books and treasures collected by the libraries of Baghdad, looted its riches, and threw those books and historical manuscripts into the Tigris River, turning its waters from their natural color to the color of ink. Despite entering as a barbaric and savage people, they transformed, after interacting with the Muslim Arabs, from savagery to civilization. This is confirmed by Gustave Le Bon, who says: "In the Arab school, the Mongols became civilized. They embraced the religion and civilization of the Arabs, and they patronized the artists and scholars of the Arabs. They established a powerful state in India, which was shaped by Arab influence, replacing the ancient Indian civilization with the civilization of the Arabs. Thus, the influence of Arab civilization can still be seen in India today" (**Le Bon, 1979, p. 233**).

Although many Orientalists who harbor hatred towards the civilization of Muslim Arabs have claimed that the Arabs were invaders and that when they entered many regions, they sought to destroy them and even burned the Library of Alexandria after conquering Egypt, Le Bon denies this accusation, considering that such barbaric acts were not characteristic of the Arab conquerors. He also points out that their religion (Islam) rejects such destructive acts, as it is a religion based on tolerance and supports knowledge and culture. He is astonished by the scholars who preceded him and how they believed and propagated this story for such a long time. He even affirms that this story was debunked in his time, as evidence showed that it was the Christians who burned the Library of Alexandria before the Arabs entered it. Roman history attests that it was they who set it on fire when "Christianity became the official state religion. The Christian emperor Theodosius, not Caliph Umar ibn al-Khattab, ordered the destruction of its temples, statues, and pagan books" (**Le Bon, 1979, p. 265**).

Gustave Le Bon continues his portrayal of the true image of Islamic civilization, and this time he moves to Andalusia, where the Arabs established a civilization that gained renown and prominence among the civilizations of human

history. It was a civilization distinguished by the spread of sciences, arts, and literature, at a time when Europe was mired in the darkness of ignorance and illiteracy. Were it not for the Arab civilization, Europe would not have known civilization and science. This is something Le Bon emphasizes, as he says: "Every country under the banner of the Prophet rapidly transformed, and in it, sciences, arts, literature, industry, and agriculture flourished remarkably" (**Le Bon, 1979, p. 391**).

In his *Civilization of the Arabs*, Le Bon praises the achievements of Muslims in medicine, astronomy, and mathematics, stating that they "preserved the heritage of the Greeks and added to it remarkable contributions." This represents the descriptive level, where Le Bon's idea is presented as it appears in his original text.

At the analytical level, and drawing on Edward Said's concept of representation, it becomes evident that this discourse, despite its positive tone, evaluates Islamic civilization primarily through its intermediary role in transmitting Eurocentric (Greek and Roman) knowledge, rather than recognizing it as the originator of an independent epistemic model. Here, one of the mechanisms of Orientalist discourse emerges, in which a civilizational hierarchy is reproduced—modern Europe is the central standard of evaluation, and Islamic civilization is positioned as a transitional link rather than an original producer.

Le Bon describes the Islamic conquests as "more tolerant and less bloody than European wars," noting that non-Muslims were allowed to retain their freedom of worship under certain conditions.

This represents the direct descriptive presentation of the idea. However, from an analytical perspective, and based on Michel Foucault's method of discourse analysis, Le Bon's discourse on tolerance cannot be separated from the power structures of colonial discourse, where praise for Islam is framed through comparison with medieval Christian Europe. This framing reproduces the "we" (the West) versus "they" (the Islamic Other) binary, maintaining the superiority of the Western model even when praising the Other.

The comparison between Gustave Le Bon and Ernest Renan reveals a fundamental divergence in the representation of Islam within Orientalist discourse. Renan, in his famous lecture *L'Islamisme et la science* (**Renan, 1883, pp. 7–8**), advanced an essentialist thesis that regarded Islam as a structural obstacle to the development of rational thought, claiming that the Semitic mind was inherently inferior to the Aryan one. By contrast, Le Bon, in *La Civilisation des Arabes* (**Le Bon, 1884, pp. 45–46**), adopted a more moderate stance, acknowledging

the Muslims' role in transmitting and developing Greek knowledge, and emphasizing their contribution to a civilization founded on cultural exchange. Philosophically, one may argue that Renan embodies a discourse of "epistemic exclusion," in which Islam is positioned as the negation of reason, whereas Le Bon belongs to a discourse of "civilizational historiography" that seeks—albeit descriptively—to explain the dynamics of Islamic culture through notions such as progress and decline. Thus, while Le Bon does not transcend the colonial framework, his narrative remains less rigid and opens the possibility for a more anthropological and nuanced reading (**Foucault, 1969**).

If Renan exemplifies essentialism, the comparison between Le Bon and Ignaz Goldziher illustrates another level of transformation within Orientalist knowledge. Goldziher, in *Muhammedanische Studien* (**Goldziher, 1889 pp. 15–16**), approaches Islam through philology and the critical analysis of traditions, treating the religious structure of Islam as a historical construct traceable through isnād and text. Le Bon, however, in *La Civilisation des Arabes* (**Le Bon, 1884, pp. 198–199**), focuses on the psycho-social dimension of Islamic civilization, describing its internal dynamics through the effects of community and religion on the formation of collective mentality. Goldziher thus represents an epistemological orientation grounded in the "philological reason," which deconstructs texts and reconstructs their historicity, thereby enacting what Said (1978) would later describe as the objectification of Islam as a "text" monopolized by the West through historical criticism. Le Bon, by contrast, develops what might be called a "socio-psychological paradigm," in which Islam is treated as a collective phenomenon to be studied through its civilizational and psychological effects. The comparison therefore reveals an ontological difference in the representation of the "Other": Goldziher reifies Islam as a text, while Le Bon sees it as a civilizational-psychological structure, making his discourse—despite remaining within the colonial horizon—closer to a modern anthropological approach.

Accordingly, situating Le Bon in relation to his contemporaries reveals that his distinctiveness lies in the shift from philological-essentialist analysis toward a socio-civilizational reading. This places him in a problematic yet significant position in the history of Orientalist thought: a position that does not escape the dominance of Western discourse over the Other, but nevertheless opens possibilities for alternative and less exclusionary interpretations.

3 .2.Culture and Science: Conditional Glorification:

Islamic civilization, with its religion, sciences, and culture, spread across several regions of the world, reaching Europe, far Asia, and even Africa. This spread was driven by several factors, some of which can be attributed to Islamic conquests, and others to the scientific institutions they established wherever they traveled and settled. The rapid spread of Islam can in large part be attributed to what we, in the preceding pages, spoke of with reference to the religious tolerance of Islam, and to the number of Muslim caliphs and rulers in the territories they conquered and who interacted with local peoples. There is no doubt that connected to their rapid spread was the just, fair, equal, and enlightened tolerance which they exemplified in all the territories where they came into contact with local structure. The Islamic civilization reached its peak in Andalusia in the last half of the 10th century, and Córdoba, the main center of scientific and cultural brilliance, illuminated western Europe as a whole through the schools and universities of Córdoba, where thousands of students from Europe were taught by Muslim philosophers and scholars with the backdrop of Andalusia.

The Islamic civilization left its mark in both the East and the West, and this is affirmed by Lobon. In the East, the impact of this civilization was seen in many aspects—cultural, scientific, religious, and linguistic—through the transmission of their knowledge to China and even India. However, he continues and says, "We should not draw broad conclusions from this statement. If the Arabs were superior to the Hindus in science, as is evident, they are inferior to them in philosophy and religion. There is nothing in the vernacular of the Qur'an, nor its childishness, which is also a feature of the Semitic religions, that compares to the theories of the Hindus, whose depth I have explained in another book" (Le Bon, 1979, p. 566). Here we observe that Gustav Lobon uses terms that insult the Islamic religion, even though, in many parts of his book, he elevates the value and importance of this religion.

The Arabs were able to establish an ancient civilization that influenced all the peoples it touched, and Lobon acknowledges that this civilization was the foundation of the Renaissance that Europe experienced in the modern era: "Europe owes its civilization to the Arabs." Going back to the 9th and 10th centuries, the Islamic civilization was at its peak, represented in Andalusia. In contrast, the other side of Europe had its cultural centers in the dark, subject to the control of feudalism and the monks of the church. This is the image Lobon conveys in his book *The Civilization of the Arabs* to highlight the difference between the life the Arabs led with their civilization and what Europe was

experiencing—ignorance and darkness. It remained this way until the 12th century, when a group of scholars and thinkers emerged and decided to awaken their nation from its slumber. They found no other path before them than the civilization of the Arabs and their knowledge and philosophy, as they were the only pioneers of civilization at that time (**Le Bon, 1979, p. 676**).

The Arab approach to science was based on experimentation and observation, which is now known as the inductive method. While many Orientalists claim that the Arabs did not bring new knowledge but merely revived Greek thought and philosophy, Lobon disagrees with this view. He believes that the Arabs, like any students of knowledge, learned from the Greeks, which is natural. However, they did not stop there; they added much more to what the Greeks had presented, thanks to their creative power. The proof of this is their use of what is now known as the inductive method. They were the first to recognize the importance of this approach in scientific research, as mentioned by D'Alembert in his book *History of Astronomy*. He argued that the Arabs relied on this method extensively compared to what the Greeks had, and through their use of this method, they made several significant scientific discoveries. In just three or four centuries, they achieved scientific breakthroughs that the Greeks could not accomplish. The Greek scientific and philosophical heritage was passed on to the Byzantines, but they failed to benefit from it, whereas when it was passed on to the Arabs, they transformed it into a new science, leaving their mark and creativity on it (**Le Bon, 1979, p. 529**).

The Arabs did not only advance sciences but also worked to spread them through the universities and institutions they established, as well as through the books they authored. This is where their influence on Europe becomes apparent, as they were the teachers of Europeans for many centuries. Without the Arabs' transmission of Greek knowledge and philosophy, Europe would not have had access to it. Lobon affirms this multiple times in his book. He highlights the contributions of the Arabs to the field of chemistry, stating: "Some authors claim that Lavoisier is the founder of chemistry, forgetting that we had no knowledge of this science, including chemistry, until it was invented suddenly, and that the Arabs had laboratories that led to discoveries without which Lavoisier could not have made his discoveries" (**Le Bon, 1979, p. 573**).

The Arabs made significant contributions to the purification of chemistry, freeing it from the superstitions and sorcery that once tainted it. This transformation was carried out by figures such as Jabir ibn Hayyan and Abu Bakr al-Razi, who turned it into a science grounded in laws based on numerous

experiments they conducted. Jabir ibn Hayyan is credited with the discovery of the theory of metals and their transformation into the elements of mercury and sulfur. This theory remained valid and was relied upon in chemical research until the 18th century. We also mention the contributions of Abu Bakr al-Razi, a scholar in both medicine and chemistry, who was known for inventing many devices that were previously unknown. He also blended chemistry and medicine, believing that healing occurred through chemical reactions within the body. Moving on to another science that Lobon points out, namely medicine or health science, we see the significant influence of the works of al-Razi and Ibn Sina on European scholars. These works continued to be used for teaching in many European universities until the 17th century. Lobon explains how the works of the surgeon Abu al-Qasim al-Zahrawi were a key resource for European surgeons after the 14th century. He emphasizes the Arabs' contributions to health and medicine through the Salerno School, a school in Europe that became famous for the medical research carried out by Arabs. The Romans, after conquering the city of Sicily in the 11th century, recognized the value of the medical books there. Constantine the African, an Arab from Carthage, was appointed head of this school, and he contributed to translating many medical texts into Latin (**Le Bon, 1979, pp. 488, 494**).

Regarding intellectual sciences such as mathematics and philosophy, Lobon mentions in his book *The Civilization of the Arabs* the extent of their development and contributions in these fields. In mathematics, specifically in algebra, the Arabs stand out as they are credited with its discovery. Although Lobon continues by saying that the origins of this science had been known for a long time, the credit for its development belongs to them, as well as for applying it to geometry. The credit for this development goes to the brilliant scholar Muhammad ibn Musa al-Khwarizmi. From his books, Europeans first acquired their knowledge of this science. The Arabs introduced the concept of tangents into trigonometry, not to mention their solutions to cubic equations. We must also acknowledge the contributions of scholars from the Islamic Maghreb, such as Muslima al-Majriti, who was a leading mathematician in Andalusia, as well as Ibn al-Saffar, al-Karmani, and many others who contributed to teaching Europeans mathematics through the theories they added to those found by the Greeks (**Le Bon, 1979, p. 455**).

expanding certain aspects of it, especially through the works of philosophers such as Ibn Sina and Ibn Rushd. He disagrees with many Orientalists who considered Ibn Rushd as merely an interpreter of Aristotle's philosophy. He believes that the interpreter surpassed his teacher in many issues and that his

thinking was distinguished by freedom in many topics. Lobon consistently emphasizes that the Arabs made a substantial contribution to bringing Europe out of its dark ages, asserting that Islamic civilization introduced European nations to the circle of humanity and taught the world how the freedom of thought could coexist with religious belief. However, despite this appreciation, Lobon does not grant Islamic philosophy complete independence from Greek philosophy. He places it within the context of a "civilizational intermediary" rather than as an independent philosophical project. This reflects a limited understanding of the philosophical developments that occurred within Islamic civilization and its conceptual and methodological distinctiveness. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that the most striking aspect of Lobon's discourse is his broad praise of the contributions of Muslims in the sciences and arts, where he asserts that Europe "owes its modern renaissance to the Arabs," and he enumerates the names of Muslim scholars and their achievements in mathematics, medicine, and chemistry. However, this praise is always coupled with a repeated reference to the idea that these achievements were the result of cross-fertilization with other civilizations.

CONCLUSION:

This research produced important results that help clarify the representations of Islamic civilization through Orientalist discourses, through Gustave Le Bon. The analytical reading showed that Le Bon operated within a dual position: he explicitly identified some admiration for Islamic civilization for its accomplishments, most notably in science and culture, though he limited this admiration to the past, removing its current context. This falls within what may be termed "conditional positive Orientalism." Furthermore, the study uncovered the psycho-social nature of Le Bon's approach, which sought to explain civilizational superiority or decline through the collective traits of peoples. Nonetheless, this understanding was still limited by Eurocentrism that believed it was the benchmark of progress. Though Le Bon distanced himself from blatant colonial discourse, his analysis had generalizations and simplifications that recreated stereotypical portraits of the Islamic Other.

Noting the entirety of the case, it becomes evident that even if Orientalism is not hostile to the way it advances episteme, it remains imbedded in a structure of epistemic domination that conforms to the tenor of the West and its relationship to the East, and therefore has normative disciplinary dimensions. This realization

makes it necessary to return critically to the intellectual and methodological frameworks that a) shaped the West's perceptions of Islamic civilization, and b) defined Western methodologies of understanding the “Other” beyond simply defining its biases, but dealing with the fundamentals of a consciousness based on Orientalism, whether it acknowledges the potential of the Islamic civilization beyond the world of Islam, or prove its worthiness of study and conversation simply because it was based somewhere in the West while relying on its own constructs and values.

On this basis, examining the representation of Islamic civilization in the thought of Gustave Le Bon, advances the knowledge of how the Other in question operates in the thought of the West, and furthers a sense of immanence of a critical discourse based on “Orientalism vs defense,” towards a knowledge-based position based on interpretation, analysis, and regulated historical consciousness.

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