

## Interculturalism and the Question of the Other

Dr. Toufaha SAHKI <sup>1</sup>, Dr. Sami LOUAFI <sup>2</sup>

1: Mohamed Cherif Messaadia University, Souk ahras, Algeria, [t.sahki@univ-soukahras.dz](mailto:t.sahki@univ-soukahras.dz)

2: Laarbi Ben Mhidi University, Oum Bouaghi, Algeria, [sami.louafi@univ-oeb.dz](mailto:sami.louafi@univ-oeb.dz)

### Abstract:

The interculturalism with the other, in its complexity and composition, has emerged as one of the most significant intellectual challenges in the contemporary Arab world. This is due to its direct connection with both the self and the other. It presents a problematic aspect in contemporary history that illustrates the nature of interculturalism with the other in general. This research aims to examine the problematic nature of interculturalism by exploring its essence, historical and cultural contexts, and its relationship with the other, primarily manifested as the occupier. It also seeks to assess the alignment between theoretical statements and practical aspects in the other's thought and presence. The study raises questions about the stages that interculturalism has undergone in the Arab world, the distinguishing features of these stages, and whether the awareness of the other's thought and culture was grounded in an understanding of Western culture as a human product subject to historical and contextual variables, as well as the conditions of time and place. The research considers the possibility that Arab awareness of the Western other was a floating awareness that overlooked the intellectual conflicts among the various spectrums of the Arab world.

**Keywords:** Interculturalism, the self, the other, cultural Specificity, intellectual conflicts.

### 1- Interculturalism and Cultural Specificity

Scholars generally argue that cultural specificity, in its abstract sense, refers to the distinction of a particular culture from others based on characteristics and elements that establish it as an independent entity. As stated by (Abed Al-Jabri, 2009), Human cultures are multiple cultures, which have existed since time immemorial and will remain diverse forever and ever. Perhaps what makes it remain so is the inclusion of many dimensions within it that go back to three: the national-national dimension, the social dimension, and then the individual and personal dimension. They are dimensions that are not permanent, but rather move and develop by virtue of history. This distinction arises from the unique nature of each culture, shaped by the general formations of values, ideas, history, and knowledge, particularly in the realm of human sciences, which have established distinct identities for different cultures over successive historical periods.

Cultural specificity is interpreted as a relative difference based on a set of cultural characteristics resulting from historical accumulations, environmental and societal interactions, and intellectual and creative efforts at the individual level. As Abed Al-Jabri

**Corresponding Author e-mail:** , [t.sahki@univ-soukahras.dz](mailto:t.sahki@univ-soukahras.dz), [sami.louafi@univ-oeb.dz](mailto:sami.louafi@univ-oeb.dz)

**How to cite this article:** Dr. Toufaha SAHKI 1, Dr. Sami LOUAFI 2. Interculturalism and the Question of the Other. Pegem Journal of Education and Instruction, Vol. 15, No. 4, 2025, 565-578

**Source of support:** Nil **Conflicts of Interest:** None. **DOI:** 10.47750/pegagog.15.04.43

**Received:** 02.02.2025

**Accepted:** 22.03.2025

**Published:** 11.05.2025

(2009) explains, "Cultural specificity is not a fixed essence, but rather a historical formation that is constantly changing and evolving. It is the product of the interaction between the individual and the society, on the one hand, and between the society and the environment, on the other hand" (pp. 202-203).

While this fact is mentally, historically, and scientifically established, it is not an absolute truth. In other words, the difference and distinction are inherently limited because human culture fundamentally shares many commonalities and foundations. As Al-Bazai (2004) notes, "There is no doubt about the existence of common denominators among human societies and communities" (p.45). The movement and interaction among different peoples and cultures generate a space of human commonality, making the assertion of cultural specificity a contingent statement rather than an absolute one.

To understand cultural specificity, a distinction must be made between fixed and relative components within cultural elements. Some sciences deal with researching various natural phenomena and attempting to explain them based on a set of governing laws. These empirical sciences rely on observation, experimentation, , and inference, transcending the different dimensions of diverse cultures. Other sciences focus on understanding human phenomena and uncovering the laws of their process. This process is essentially relative, even if it utilizes scientific achievements from various fields of experimental science, as it is not regulated by absolute and strict controls but often colored by the culture from which it emerged.

Cultural difference is a tangible phenomenon witnessed by many features of the culture itself, including language, beliefs, history, traditions, cognitive and taste products of science, literature, and arts, as well as patterns of behavior and methods of expression. As stated by Al-Bazai , "Cultural difference is a tangible phenomenon witnessed by many features of the culture itself, most notably language, beliefs, history, traditions, and cognitive and taste products of science, literature, and arts, as well as patterns of behavior and methods of expression, and so on" (2008, p. 13).

Considering these references in interpreting the relationship between science, knowledge, and cultural origins, the concept of cultural specificity becomes central within the set of concepts expressing the openness of the human phenomenon and the interactive act between the spectrums of human culture. This raises the question: Are there theoretical determinants for the concept of cultural specificity?

If cultural specificity refers to a kind of distinction for a particular culture, then this distinction is undoubtedly due to original frameworks that contributed to highlighting a special form for a specific human culture. This means that there are component elements justifying the emergence of the concept of cultural specificity, appearing on more than one level. It is self-evident that every culture has a common thought and behavior among its members and a history specific to its individuals. As Al-Bazei (2008) notes, "the difference in cultures is an obvious matter, the difference between English culture from Arabic, Arabic from Chinese, and so on" (p. 15). The issue of distinction by virtue of these elements, synonymous with the concept of privacy, applies to both the elite and the popular, with a set of customs, traditions, and values inclusive of all. There are also values related to the popular phenomenon and values related to the elite, with the elite values being the most influential in the process of cultural interaction.

From this standpoint, which has previously raised controversy about the space of Arab cultural privacy, several questions arise: Is it an open space or non-existent? Can historical circumstances and oppressive contexts be a reason and incentive to reconsider the concept of Arab cultural specificity?

As an introduction to these questions, Arab researchers have wondered whether there is an Arab cultural specificity or not, depending on each direction's perception of the concept. Generally, Arab cultural specificity refers to the idea that Arab culture is characterized by a set of pillars, constants, and references that distinguish it from other cultures. As Ibrahim (1999) argues, it is arbitrary to "subject it to systems that have no connection to its original systems" (pp. 7-8). The Arab cultural environment, for instance, is a tribal environment based on the tribal component as a fundamental structure of Arab society. This component indicates that the concept of group is primarily based on kinship ties rather than civil institutions, as is the case in Western society. Additionally, there is the religious component, as Arab culture is characterized by being a religious culture that derives its life origins from the reference of the Qur'anic revelation. Even non-Muslim Arab minorities blend into the general cultural character of Arab-Islamic civilization with a set of customs and practices that distinguish the Christians of the East from others, sometimes even reaching a contradiction with Westerners of the same religion, as Al-Arawi (2006) states, "culture is all manifestations of human expression, and every work is an expression, not only literature and art, but also religions or mythologies (i.e., myths) with their rituals and divinities, with their worship and beliefs, as well as morals (i.e., national morals) and aspects of social life such as clothing, adornment, and how to cook and eat, etc." (p. 99). Arab cultural specificity is also closely related to the linguistic component, which is considered a pivotal basis in establishing the Arab cultural identity. Language embodies the common mental and intellectual references among the Arab peoples. As Al-Jazairi (1989) notes, "language reflects human customs, values and traditions, and the systems and ideals of societies are crystallized in it" (p. 8).

From all of this, it can be said that Arab cultural specificity—in that culture is a way of feeling, thinking, and behaving—is an inevitable reality. However, the focus of the debate has been on the extent of Arab culture's readiness to receive Western concepts and whether these imported concepts affect the amputation of the Arab cultural identity and undermine its stable components. This has called for a new question about the limits of this cultural identity and whether these boundaries are capable of being stretched or are they finite.

Based on that, there was a fear that interculturalism would turn from a developmental act into a destructive one. As Hamouda (2001) notes, some have reached the point of being "fascinated by the West and Western culture to the point of complete blindness" (p. 25). This is especially concerning since the stage that witnessed the dawn of interculturalism was also a stage that witnessed a state of weakness, backwardness, and Arab cultural stagnation, positioning Arab culture as a margin in the face of the Western center. Hamouda (1998) describes this situation, stating, "The reality of the Arab world is determined by the historical circumstance represented by the emergence of this world in the last half-century only from the circle of foreign colonialism, a colonialism that left behind poverty and ignorance and an alphabetical illiteracy that the Arab regimes in many countries were unable to deal with, not to mention the complex and multifaceted cultural illiteracy" (p. 325).

In light of this fact, which indicates the seriousness and difficulty of the situation, it seemed that the process of interculturalism was not an equal practice at all levels. If interculturalism determines the meaning of participation, then where is the Arab participation in enriching global culture or even in providing its Western counterpart with the Arab cultural achievement? Consequently, the question became complex: Can we talk about interculturalism between margin and center? And if interculturalism in this context were to occur, would it be permissible for it to be one-sided, specifically from the Arab side?

If the situation of cultural specificity as a whole, is of such complexity and crisis, then cultural specificity as a field of direct research is not in a better state than its predecessor. The cultural problem is a general problem in which cultural specificity is placed in the position of a part of the whole. The cultural openness that occurred after the spread of the Islamic call to nations other than the Arab nation led to quoting from the scientific and cultural achievements of other civilizations, such as the Greek and others. As Hamouda (1998) notes, this effect did not "disgrace the Arab mind or diminish the importance of its achievements" (p. 325). This influenced the creation of openness and pluralism within the Arab cultural pattern itself.

What happened in that distinct historical stage in terms of interculturalism with different cultural environments is considered a reference to the current cultural event, embodied in the interculturalism of modern civilization from the beginning of this process in the middle of the nineteenth century until the present period. This period witnessed great fertility at the level of cultural interaction with Western culture, confirming that there is a connection "in some sense with Western culture" (Hegazy, 2004, p. 13). This resulted in a wide cultural movement in the Arab cultural arena, both conceptually and procedurally, to the point that Arab culture was on the verge of losing its identity in light of Western cognitive acceleration on the one hand, and the slowness of the Arab response on the other hand. Interculturalism with Western culture took on a problematic dimension, and it became legitimate to ask the following question: Is there an Arab specificity?

Although some intellectuals believe that this defect in the contemporary Arab environment cannot be a reason for "a sense of weakness on the one hand, nor arrogance on the other hand" (Ibrahim & Al-Ghanimi, 1996, p. 6) regarding this new knowledge, this question necessarily refers to the issue of cultural privacy. What exists in the field of practice from what was mentioned above is, in fact, the product of the Western environment and has been applied to the Arab environment in a way that suggests alienation and hegemony on the part of the Western other, even if the intellectuals who practiced interculturalism in the Arab world do not deviate from being Arabs.

The legitimacy of the above-mentioned question is based on the fact that contemporary Arab culture was formed in these compelling circumstances that forced the pioneers of this field to borrow the culture and knowledge of the West in good and bad ways. The historical context was the context of the Western occupation of most Arab countries, which resulted in comprehensive cultural backwardness in exchange for Western superiority in various fields, including the civilizational and cultural field. Many of the Arab intellectuals who are considered references for contemporary Arab thought and culture were trained in Western scientific centers (like Taha HUSSEIN, Mohamed MANDOUR, and Salama MUSA),

which formed an initial image for the observer of the early cultural effort as a reproduction of the Western experience (Hamouda, 2001, p.26).

Even if some Arab thinkers tried to root this new type of practice and link it to the nature of the ancient Arab environment, in terms of its values, principles, and mechanisms, such as what Taha Hussein did when he expressed his doubt about pre-Islamic poetry, not only from the Cartesian mind and the Lansdowne Documents, even if he considered them to be the essential basis for his criticism, it was about heritage origins that go back to the issue of plagiarism in pre-Islamic poetry, which was discussed by ancient critics for the purpose of verifying Arabic poetry and examining it in a way that enables a correct knowledge of its derivatives.

It seems that the attempt to return to ancient Arabic criticism and make it a basis for contemporary critical practice was not an arbitrary act, but it was a form of reluctance through which they wanted to remove the Western character from contemporary Arab criticism, even though this characteristic remained inherent to it because they did not find it necessary to invoke it every time. In the sense that Arab criticism was, in many of its manifestations, nothing but an attempt to extract the Western critical experience and transfer it from its specific context to a different context, which is the Arab context. As Al-Jundi (1985) considers, this is "a dangerous matter that bears many aspects of natural and rational acquaintance between eras and environments" (p. 55).

Everything that Arab intellectuals and thinkers did in seeking rooting was an attempt to preserve the Arab critical peculiarity and to emphasize that the presence of the Western method, concept, and terminology is nothing but a form of interculturalism. The question arises: Was this interculturalism based on the principle of participation? In other words, was it a process of giving and taking, or did it remain attached to the absolute reception that transformed the concept of reception? Did reception and acceptance turn into mere follow-up and attachment, leading to the Arab being part of the Western whole and an exact copy of the original? Did it become a direction and orientation from which there is no turning away, "with what that entails of sanctification or giving it an aura of respect and admiration" (Al-Bazai, 2008, p. 14)?

Although some Arab critics affirmed and defended the specificity, arguing that "there is a specificity in that criticism that is difficult to overcome except with a significant amount of modification" (Al-Bazai, 2008, p. 78), others have reached the point of denying the specificity of Arab criticism and considering criticism a universal human achievement that is suitable for Western culture just as it is suitable for Arab culture. As Al-Alam (1989) states, "The current civilization is not the other in the sense that it is a civilization. The other in it for us is colonialism, imperialism, Zionism, monopoly capitalism, racism, fascism, and Nazism... but in terms of civilization, that is, science, rationality, technological creativity, research methods, philosophy, literature, art, culture, and common concerns, it is not the other" (p. 140).

Perhaps the globalist starting points of these intellectuals made them believe in these theses and defend them with great determination. The outcome of this is that theories and methods such as Marxism and socialist realism take universality as a call behind these and similar interpretations. In other words, the Arab intellectual, in light of this reference, is no

longer forced to search for cultural specificity or attempt to root his thought and knowledge. The one who proposes the thesis of universality can only carry out a simple interpretive process of the concept of cultural specificity in order to find himself avoiding entering into a dispute over the problem of interculturalism in general, in the manner previously detailed. That is, the problem of interculturalism, in its relationship to cultural and critical specificity as a reference dimension.

Hence, the relationship with cultural specificity was a relationship of affirmation and denial. The one who affirms specificity is obligated to limit its boundaries and answer the question of interculturalism, despite the presence of Arab cultural and cognitive distinction that necessitates returning to the notion of context or environment. As for the one who denies specificity, he is free from falling into this major problem related to rooting and localization (Al Ruwaili & Al-Bazai, 2002, p. 82) and the problematic issues that accompany them, confirming their presence in this context. This does not negate that this intellectual will be far from this conflict, but he will not be present at the level at which the intercultural person is present with regard to the problem of interculturalism and its relationship to cultural specificity.

All of this appears as a comprehensive human model that encompasses the human phenomenon at all levels. Western thinkers no longer acknowledge any differences separating the Western model from other humanitarian models. It is a narrow and arrogant view, as the self-centered Western culture declared "the concept of the West as a cultural component that never complies with the conditions of geography" (Ibrahim, 1999, p. 16). Despite this, some Arab thinkers made the Western model a central reference and a theoretical framework for their intellectual and cognitive perceptions, contributing to their perception of the space of Arab critical privacy as a non-existent space.

## **2- Interculturalism and the Other:**

The concept of the "other" has become a prominent topic, a cultural, political, and economic illusion, and a recurring theme in contemporary discourse. The term "other" occupies a significant place in the speech of many individuals, and contemporary Arab cultural discourse is particularly crowded with references to the other.

In its simplest form, the "other" is the counterpart or opposite of the self or the "ego." It is not possible to discuss the concept of the other in isolation from the self. To fully understand the dynamics between the self and the other, it is essential to define both concepts.

### **2-1- Self-concept:**

The self has no meaning except as the counterpart to the "other" (Autre), corresponding to opposition and contrast, or as the counterpart to the self expressed by "Identité", which is what we translate today as identity or concreteness. In other words, it is the fact that a thing is what it is, itself.

It goes without saying that the word "ego" in contemporary Arabic is a translation and adaptation of the meaning of "le même" in French and "Ego" in English and German. The



word "Ego" is Latin for what the word "self" indicates in the Arabic language when it refers to the person speaking. From this word, other terms were derived, such as "Egocentrism" which we translate today as "self-centeredness," as well as "Egoïsme" which means selfishness in general linguistic usage (Abed Al-Jabri, 2009, p. 21).

In philosophical terminology, the word refers to the philosophical doctrine that considers the existence of beings other than the ego to be an illusory existence or, at the very least, a subject of doubt. This gives rise to the idealistic philosophical doctrines that do not recognize any existence other than the representations of the ego. The world is what I represent and imagine, and there is no other existence.

According to the definitions provided in the "Lalande" philosophical dictionary, the meaning of ego (Moi) is as follows: "individual awareness, as preoccupied with its interests and biased towards itself," and also, "the tendency to attribute everything to the self" (Lalande, 2001, p. 21).

In addition to this definition by Lalande, we find him citing a statement by the French philosopher and theologian Pascal, in which he says, "The ego has two characteristics: it is unjust in itself in that it creates itself against everyone, and it is discordant with others in that it desires to enslave them, because every ego is the enemy, and wants to be the tyrant of all others" (ibid, p. 824).

From this standpoint, it becomes clear that the concept of the ego is based on control, that is, the self's control over what it takes as its subject, whether this subject is natural objects or other people.

In this sense, Max Horkheimer wrote, "It is very difficult for one to precisely determine what European languages at one time wanted to say and mean through the word (ego)".

The word "ego" is laden with ambiguous and unproductive implications. As the principle of the "ego" strives to triumph in the battle against nature in general, other people in particular, and the behavioral motives that drive it, the "ego" appears to be connected to the functions of control, governance, and organization. The concept of the ego has never been freed from its original burdens and impurities associated with the system of social control. Even idealistic formulations, such as Descartes' theory of the ego, seem to actually incorporate the meaning of control. Gassendi's objections to "The Meditations", (the title of Descartes' book) mock the concept of a small spirit called the "Ego", who, from within his castle hidden in the depths of the brain coordinate the information transmitted by the senses and issues commands to the various parts of the body (Abed Al-Jabri, 2009, p. 22).

The perception of the ego as a principle of control determines the location, meaning, and function of the "other" in European thought. In this context, the "other" is seen as an object of control, an enemy, or as a bridge through which the self recognizes itself.

## **2-2- The Concept of the Other:**

A brief examination of the history and development of the term "other" in contemporary European thought reveals that the concept crystallized in psychological studies,

particularly with the French psychologist Jean Lacan, who employed it within the dialectic of subject and object. Some trace the origin of the term back to Hegelian philosophy, especially in the analysis Alexandre Kojève conducted of Hegel's book "The Phenomenology of Spirit" in the 1930s, which influenced Jean Lacan.

The concept of the "other" has been invoked in various contexts by numerous thinkers, both in philosophy and in other social and human sciences. We find references to the "other" in the works of Sartre, Foucault, Emmanuel Levinas, and Derrida, among others. Moreover, the concept appears, either explicitly or implicitly, in anthropological, psychological, and social studies, as well as in literary critical studies and postcolonial criticism (Al-Bazai, 2008, p. 34).

According to Sartre, the other plays a crucial role in the formation of the self. He believes that existential self-awareness is established under the gaze of the self, but the other is not a benevolent entity; rather, it involves hostility that destroys our humanity. This is because it suspends being or existence in a forced and non-independent way between the two moments of what was and what is to come. Sartre argues that this situation makes subjective being depend in a shameful way on the gaze and stare of others, a situation that strictly prevents freedom of choice and establishes a certain determinism. Consequently, Jean-Paul Sartre concluded his play "No Exit" with the famous saying, "Hell is other people." In this way, Sartre has linked the concept of the other to hell, as well as the connection between being and the shame resulting from the idea of falling into heaven.

The importance of the other in Sartrean philosophy stems from its fundamental role in forming the self and determining identity, as well as its contributions to establishing and directing the subjective, personal, national, and cultural logic. In this regard, Sartre's perspective aligns with that of Jean Lacan. On the other hand, Michel Foucault sees the other as inextricably linked to the self, just as life is linked to death. He believes that the self, in its enslavement of the other, only enslaves and disobeys the person himself. For Foucault, the others are "the abyss" or the limited judiciary within finiteness and finality, the human body in which discourse is formed.

Foucault posits that the other is the un-thought within thought itself, or the margin that the center excludes, or the past that the present excludes. However, it is essence in relation to the being of the discourse that excludes it. We cannot know the present without the past, just as we cannot know the self without the other. At the level of discourse, the other represents the features of discontinuity and separation that history tries to exclude in order to confirm its continuity.

The concept of the other is rooted in the concept of essence, meaning that there is a basic, fundamental characteristic that defines the self, which makes the other different from it and, therefore, not belonging to its system, whatever that system may be (Al Ruwaili & Al-Bazai, 2002, p. 22).

Jean Lacan describes the other as a symbolic and subconscious linguistic structure that helps the self achieve its existence within a dialectical relationship between the self and its counterpart, which he calls the other. In this regard, Lacan's perspective is influenced by Hegelian philosophy.



While Levinas believes that the source of discourse is the "self," Derrida demonstrates, based on Levinas's own discourse, that the other is the true source. This is because the ego cannot create an external entity within itself without colliding with the other.

Furthermore, language itself creates this other, which consistently distorts its own purity and the purity of the self. As Derrida states in his book "The Monolingualism of the Other", the language of the other came from the other; it is the coming of the other. From this, it becomes evident that the other is essential not only to the being of the self but also holds the same importance for everything related to it. Derrida even believes that sexuality itself comes from the other (Ibid, p. 23).

According to what is evident in the history of Orientalism, the other is "the cultural, geographical, and human formation in general that is different from the West and called the East" (Al-Bazai, 2009, p. 34).

The East is the antithesis of Europe, its opposite or other face, and simultaneously the subject of its analysis, knowledge, and control. Consequently, according to Edward Said, the East is a mental construct rather than a reality. If the East, as portrayed in Edward Said's treatment of Orientalism, is the other for the West, they will perceive all the features by which the East differs from the West as inferior and perhaps even inhuman.

The 1990s witnessed a surge in the use of the term "the other" and its derivations, particularly "otherness," in Western literature. Over the past two decades, more than a hundred books have been published in the English language alone, exploring the concepts of the other and otherness from various perspectives. These works delve into topics such as "otherness and the means of communication," "otherness and the self," and "otherness within."

On the other hand, we find some Arab studies that focused on this aspect at both theoretical and applied levels. In this context, two simultaneous books were published: the first entitled "The Image of the Other: The Arab Looking and Looking at Him" in 1999, and the second entitled "The West in Arab Societies: Representations and Interactions" in 1998-1999. We also find the study completed by Aziz Al-Azma under the title "Arabs and Barbarians: Muslims and Other Civilizations" in 1991 (Ibid, p. 35). Other Arab researchers have used the term "other" to reveal the biases of discourse, especially colonialism, in their approaches to the West, addressing concepts such as rooted Orientalism, Westernization, homosexuality, and bias.

The meanings of the other can be determined through two main contexts. The first context is cognitive, in which the other appears as a basic formative concept of identity, that is, of the self as it defines its identity. In this sense, there is no identity without the other. This cognitive process begins in early childhood, or the stage known as the mirror stage, in which the self discovers its existence and difference from others. It is also a continuous stage that branches out as the connotations of identity become more complex, encompassing political, cultural, social, and economic levels.

The second context is a moral-value context through which the other gains value or a position on a hierarchical scale, determining whether they are accepted or rejected, good or bad. These two contexts often intersect, as identifying identity is frequently part of a moral or ethical position (Ibid, p. 37).

Consequently, the concept and term of the other are present in numerous branches of contemporary knowledge and on multiple levels, including the philosophical or intellectual other, the psychological other, the creative other, the anthropological other, and the cultural other (religious, popular, civilizational). While it is challenging to completely separate these levels from each other, the relationship remains intertwined and distinct, mirroring the general interconnectedness of branches of knowledge. An example of this can be found at the creative, literary, and artistic level, which depicts the relationship between the self and the other culturally and in a complex manner, as represented by the French poet Rimbaud in his famous phrase, "I am the other" (Ibid, p. 38). In light of this renowned phrase, we can understand Rimbaud's position towards Africa, which represented an "other" that he felt compelled to seek out, noting that he spent a period of his short life (1854-1891 AD) in Africa. Undoubtedly, in this stance on the other, the psychological blends with the philosophical and the anthropological to form an intertwined picture.

Those concerned with the term believe that the meaning of the other is based on three major axes:

**First:** The other, in its most common sense, refers to another person or a different group of people with a unified identity. By comparing oneself or one's group with that person or group, one can determine their difference from it. This opposition often involves diminishing the value of the other and elevating the value of the self or identity. Such a proposition is common in confronting cultures, particularly in colonial discourse.

**Second:** The scenic other, which differs from the first only in the state of the self and its crystallization in the mirror stage, as described by Jean Lacan. During the developmental stage, the child consistently attempts to achieve their ideal image reflected in the mirror as a complete whole and to control their body. However, this scene has an alienating effect, as control is impossible. Consequently, this otherness has a threatening aspect in the image of the similar other. This concept of the other finds its use in feminist criticism, the gaze, film theory, and even visual commercials (Al Ruwaili & Al-Bazai, 2002, p. 23).

**Third:** The symbolic other, which, according to Lacan and other French thinkers, is the other par excellence. They all believe that a person's being is only achieved through the ability to speak (Ibid, p. 24). However, this ability depends on the use of a representational system (language) that precedes existence. Thus, the expression of subjective ideas and the manner in which the self is represented comes only through language, which always precedes existence. Therefore, when a person speaks, it has originally been spoken or written beforehand. This situation makes self-consciousness itself penetrated from the outside, meaning that pure subjectivity is not pure because the strange other has already entered the core of its structure. This concept is evident in existential philosophy and post-structuralist philosophy.

## 2-3- Interculturalism and the Other:

If the other encompasses all these perceptions, which collectively indicate that the other appears as the opposite of the self, a hell that the self experiences in its imagination and reality, and a necessity for the self to know its way to existence, then the question that arises is: How can interculturalism with the other be achieved? What are its conditions? The answer to this question will not be simple, given the nature and essence of interculturalism and the essence of the concept of the other, as well as the ambiguity of the relationship between the two parties, which is complex, highly intertwined, and intricate.

Interculturalism with other, based on the aforementioned premises, imposes a dialectical nature that requires reservation by the intercultural person's ego in receiving other concepts and knowledge. This is because the other represents a structure that is opposite and contradictory to the ego's cognitive and cultural structure, given the initial perception of the other as the embodiment of the cultural, mental, and behavioral opposite. Therefore, interculturalism will be a dual process based on two fundamental principles:

The first principle is to receive various knowledge, concepts, and approaches by transferring them from their cultural source, both cumulatively and procedurally. The second principle is to attempt to isolate these concepts from their cultural context in two ways: interpretation and rooting. Interpretation involves systematically, scientifically, or exemplarily interpreting the concepts, while rooting involves searching for the roots and origins of this knowledge in the receiving environment. This process is related to the level of relative knowledge that is tied to specific environmental, historical, and cultural circumstances, and it represents the foundational knowledge in the process of interculturalism for two reasons. First, these knowledge and concepts lead to references and cultural backgrounds that depict the cultural environment from which they emanate. Second, these cognitive concepts serve as the actual tool for interpreting and abstracting experimental sciences. For example, the concept of the Copernican Revolution can be abstracted from a scientific renaissance that proves the Earth and solar planets orbit the sun, not the other way around, to an abstract concept upon which civilization, secularism, and humanity are manifestations of centering instead of theology, metaphysics, and priesthood.

Accordingly, interculturalism with the other requires high and constant sensitivity and mental alertness, as falling into the trap of reference means falling into the trap of identity alienation. Cultural and civilizational identity, in particular, becomes vulnerable to destruction from within, in a calm manner, with identity becoming an identical copy of the other's identity. Compatibility between them is a fundamental essence in the process of interculturalism. To avoid this cultural and methodological danger, three issues of difference must be considered when acculturating.

The first issue is to consider the relative differences between the self and the other (the Western opposite) in terms of the environment that is acculturated to or transferred from, which is the Western cultural environment. This cultural environment is generally characterized by a cultural context that is completely different from the Arab cultural context. Western culture isolates religious authority in life and scientific reality, while "the Qur'an represents the central, effective, and influential force in Arab-Islamic culture, as the source from which the religious vision of existence emerges, with its semantic and stylistic fabric and specific linguistic structure, followed by the Prophetic Hadith, the presence of which gains

importance in that it is a detail of that totality. The relationship between the Qur'an and the Hadith is a marginal relationship, and they emerge from a single vision and aim to establish a single intellectual system" (Ibrahim, 2005, p. 91). In the Western conception, science contradicts religion, and their movement cannot be parallel or compatible. The religious experience in the Western environment was a bitter experience of confining minds, restricting thinking, confiscating public freedoms, and imposing a single system on Western thinking that represents a state of domination and oppression. It is also a system that contradicts the least scientific and rational axioms, relying absolutely on holy books that constantly contradict certain scientific and rational facts and conflict with each other to the point of contradiction.

This situation led the elite of thinkers and scientists in the West to rise up against this ecclesiastical hegemony and proceed from the secularization of the research phenomenon at various levels of knowledge, including the cultural and scientific aspects. They considered separating the scientific and mental phenomenon from the religious phenomenon as the only approach to approaching the human phenomenon as an independent topic in research and study, as "comprehensive secularism is what the Western civilizational model is heading toward" (Al-Bazai, 2009, p. 53).

Arab thinkers tried to evoke this experience in a way that equated it with the Arab experience, describing it in their view as an institution that monopolizes the truth and practices the exclusion of dissenting opinions. These thinkers supported their opinions with evidence from Arab-Islamic history, mostly individual and limited examples that do not represent the general direction of the Arab religious institution. The interpretation previously mentioned as its entrance into the process of interculturalism had a central impact on this attempt at similarity. Thus, thinkers created a reality similar, if not identical, to the Western reality in order to reach identical results and fully represent the Western experience by emptying the ego, starting from its cultural content, and leveling it with the other. Some started from the premise that "the West is a mirror that helps us see ourselves on the civilizational scale and determines for us on what level we stand...how we will approach and what tools we will use to complete the project of modernity" (Abu Mansour, 1985, p. 22).

This calls for a serious reconsideration of the culture project at the civilizational level in order to understand the reality of the Arab and Western models in a way that allows for an optimal perception of these two models on the fundamental foundations from which they emerge. On the other side, taking into account the historical context of the knowledge brought from the Western environment is a must to separate between limited knowledge in history and time and extended knowledge. It is no secret that much of the knowledge and sciences are merely connected to a specific historical circumstance, as evidenced by the transcendence that characterizes Western thought, and the limitation of much of the knowledge in history is an established issue with certainty. If some people idolize the knowledge of others by making them templates and final models, others cannot accept that, because this type of researcher starts from the position of the superior and the perfect human being, which is a direct belittling and elimination of the other. That is, the Arab ego, and the relative sciences cannot be exemplary because their character is essentially dialogic.

The possibility of achieving interculturalism with the other is mainly due to awareness of the essence of the self and the other. Because it is a dialectical matter and not pure

reception, meaning that the literary critic is obligated to realize the nature of the sender and the addressee, and if we look at the general contexts of the other in terms of historical and cultural background, we must review the fundamental contexts that contributed to the formation of the ego culturally, historically, and realistically, which is what we can call clarifying the relative differences between the ego and the other through the historical and cultural components of the ego that are automatically reflected in the cultural component. As part of the total essence, "the European Renaissance witnessed the emergence of two intellectual movements that complemented one another: humanism and the emergence of the natural sciences as alternatives to the theological point of view in understanding man and the world. There are two things that distinguish the Renaissance from previous eras: the discovery of the world and the discovery of man" (Masari, 2006, p. 27).

The second issue that should be taken into account in the interculturalism process in general is the nature of the (receiving) Arab environment and culture, as the Arab environment is of a special nature, and its cultural components differ from the Western cultural components. This means that the knowledge that is disguised as its environment must be examined and adapted in order to harmonize with the cultural data of the receiving environment.

On the other side, there is another trend that believes the West is the source of all evil, and that any borrowing from its culture, except for technological knowledge in which there is no ideology, is an exclusion of cultural existence and an alienation of identity. The systematic (intercultural person) researcher in the field of culture and science must mediate between these two tendencies, adhering to the correct scientific methodology that does not sanctify or desecrate a model, but rather receives and calls for the knowledge that is appropriate to its culture and leaves out what is not consistent with its cultural references, which is not absolute, but is relative, dressed in the guise of culture, era, history, and the researcher. Accordingly, it cannot be said, "There are principles established by the Europeans to which all manners in the whole world are subject? And if they say that, do we accept that, since Arab literature has long roots and precedes all of these manners in origin and formation?" (Al-Jundi, 1985, p. 18).

### **Conclusion:**

The Arab-Islamic civilization, at one of the moments of building its great edifice, did not withdraw into itself, but rather tried, within the framework of interculturalism and through the movement of translation, to interact with other civilizations, finding within it the imprints of Greek, Persian, and Indian culture. Within Western cultures, there is a strong presence of Arab-Islamic culture, and perhaps civilizational superiority was the primary motivation for the emergence of cultural interculturalism as part of the picture of interculturalism in general. The weakest cultural field, furthest from innovation and productivity, will be forced to come into contact with the finest Western experience in order to achieve its qualitative development, whether in terms of material or concept, providing a direct impetus to catch up with the highest civilizational pace represented in the cultural field in particular.

### **References:**

- Abdul Aziz Hamouda: Concave Mirrors, Towards an Arab Critical Theory, World of Knowledge Series, National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters Kuwait, 2001.
- Abdul Aziz Hamouda: Convex Mirrors, from Structuralism to Deconstruction, World of Knowledge Series, National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters Kuwait, 1998.
- Abdullah Al-Arawi: Arabs and Historical Thought, Arab Cultural Center, Casablanca, Morocco, 5th edition, 2006 AD.
- Abdullah Ibrahim, Saeed Al-Ghanimi, Awad Ali: Knowing the Other, Introduction to Critical Methods, Arab Cultural Center, Beirut, 2nd edition, 1996.
- Abdullah Ibrahim: Arab culture and borrowed references, the intersection of patterns and concepts and the stakes of globalization, Arab Cultural Center, Casablanca, Morocco, 1999.
- Abdullah Ibrahim: Reception and Cultural Contexts, Difference Publications, Algeria, 2nd edition, 2005.
- Among the Arab critics who worked in Western scientific centers: Taha Hussein, Muhammad Mandour, Salama Musa.
- Andre Lalande: Lalande Philosophical Encyclopedia, Trans.: Khalil Ahmed Khalil, Oweidat Publications, Beirut, Paris, 2001, 2nd edition, vol. 02.
- Anwar Al-Jundi: Characteristics of Arabic Literature, Confronting the Theories of Modern Literary Criticism, Dar Al-Kitab Al-Lubani, Beirut, Lebanon, 2nd edition, 1985.
- Fareh Masari: Modernity in the Thought of Muhammad Arkoun, A Preliminary Approach, Difference Publications, Algeria, 2006.
- Fouad Abu Mansour: Modern Structural Criticism between Lebanon and Europe, Dar Al-Jeel, Beirut, 1985.
- Mahmoud Amin Al-Alam: Concepts and Problematic Issues, New Culture House, Cairo, 1989.
- Megan Al-Ruwaili and Saad Al-Bazai: The Literary Critic's Guide, Illumination of More than Seventy Contemporary Critical Currents and Terms, Arab Cultural Center, Casablanca, Morocco, 3rd edition, 2002 AD.
- Muhammad Abed Al-Jabri: Globalization and the Crisis of Neoliberalism, Book Two, Thought and Criticism Series, Arab Network for Research and Publishing, Beirut, 2009.
- Muhammad Abed Al-Jabri: Islam and the West (The Self and the Other), Book One, Thought and Criticism Series, Arab Network for Research and Publishing, Beirut, 2009.
- Muhammad bin Abdul Karim Al-Jazairi: The language of every nation is the soul of its culture, Dar Al-Shehab for Printing and Publishing, Batna, 1989.
- Saad Al-Bazai: Receiving the Other, The West in Modern Arab Criticism, Arab Cultural Center, Casablanca, Morocco, 2004.
- Saad Al-Bazei: Cultural Difference and the Culture of Disagreement, Arab Cultural Center, Casablanca, Morocco, 2008.
- Samir Saeed Hegazy: The Problem of Method in Contemporary Arab Criticism, Dar Taiba for Publishing, Distribution and Scientific Equipment, Cairo, 2004.