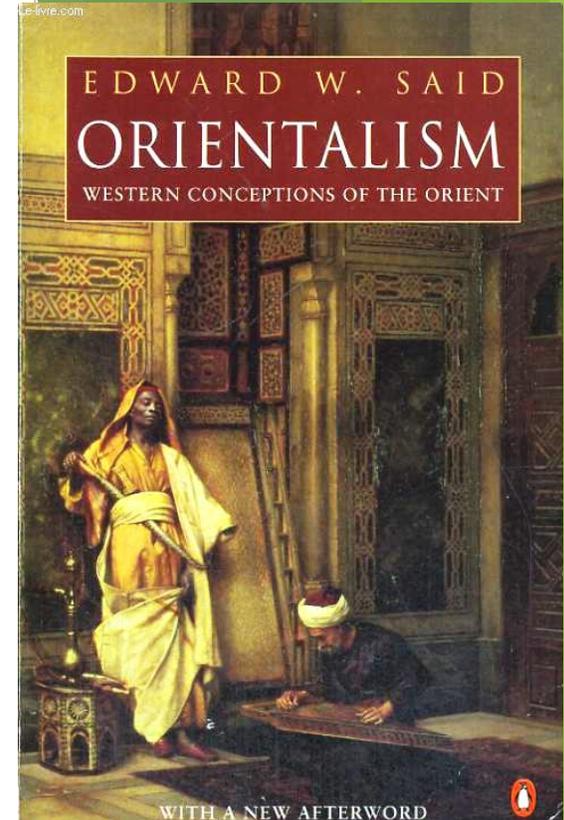


Looking in the mirror of the post-modernism vs. modernism debate

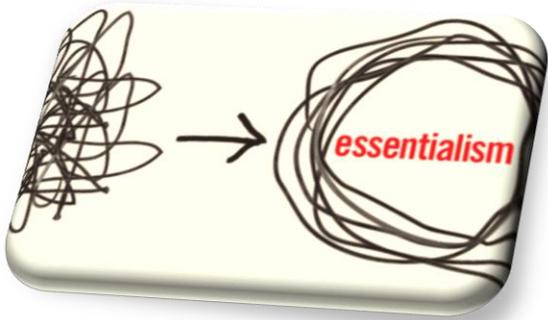


Benjamin Lee Hegeman
Bridging the Divide 2018



How much of our divide mirrors the secular divide?

- ▶ We are not spiritual children of our generation but we are influenced by the conversation about Islam in our age. There is a widespread academic and media divide over Islam and it belongs to a much broader discussion between what is now called ‘modernity’ and ‘post-modernity’.

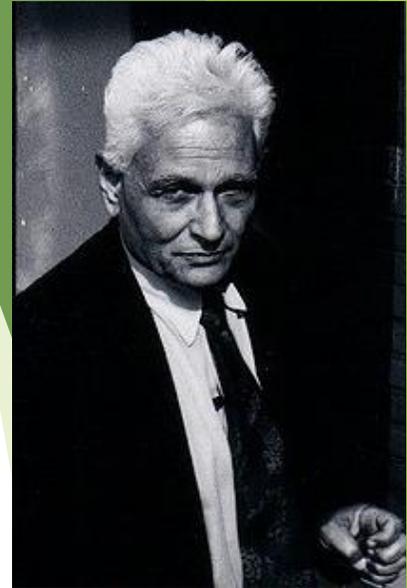


I identify modernism when...

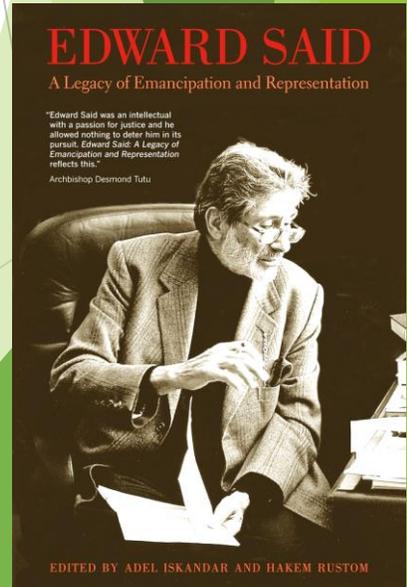
- ▶ First, I sense the confidence that life, a belief, a religion, history, can be explained with a **meta** or **mega narratives**, broad explanations, and more universal paradigms.
- ▶ second, by a conviction that the centre of gravity is chiefly among those in the inner, power context -and not in the peripheries. Modernity arguments were first called 'essentialism' in intellectual debates in 1958.
- ▶ Concerning Islam, modernist explanations tend to focus more on classical Islam theology as a coherent religion. Since 1769 the Western modernist study of Islam has been called 'Orientalism'.

I identify post-modern thinking when...

- ▶ first, I sense a **distrust** that mega narratives can effectively explain life, beliefs, religion and history.
- ▶ second by the desire to ‘**deconstruct**’ mega narratives and give credibility, rather, to personal, communal, and smaller narrative voices.
- ▶ Post-modernism came from French intellectuals in the early 1970s (esp. post- structuralists **Jacques Derrida**).
- ▶ In 1978, a foremost post-modernist attack on modernist Islamic explanations came from **Edward Said**’s work called *Orientalism*.

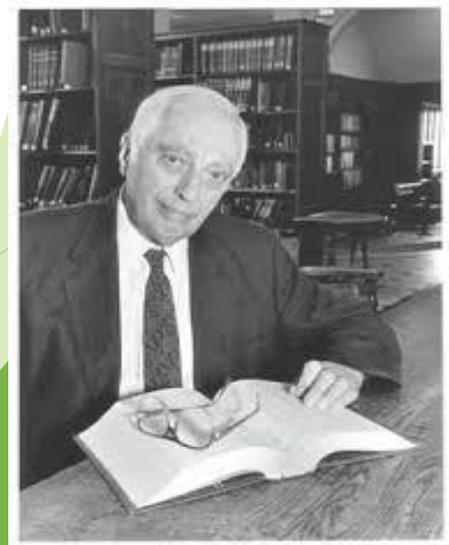


Jacques Derrida



The post-modern dominance...

- ▶ In the 21st century, the dominant secular **academia** view of Islam is post-modern.
- ▶ Post-modernism focuses chiefly on **Muslims as people**, on diversity, on minority voices, on marginalised communities and a range of identities. This view rejects generalisations about Islam.
- ▶ The strongest recent secular critic against post-modern view of Islam is the late **Bernard Lewis**. I refer to post-modern arguments concerning Muslims/Islam as **peripheralism**.



Mirroring

WILLOW

How are we influenced by this secular divide?

- ▶ As Christians, let's read about, learn and be conversant about both camps but belong to neither. How much of our divide mirrors this academic divide?
- ▶ P.S. A separate intellectual divide in the 21st century is among Muslims between the Classical Theocratic Islamic Narrative (Sayyid Qutb) and the Grand Muslim Civilisation Narrative (Benazir Bhutto).

