

# East and West. Dialogue or Monologues?

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## **Abstract**

The confrontation of Modern Western culture with that of the Middle East sometimes appears to boil down to the conflicting theses of Edward Said and Samuel Huntington. The examination of a few texts in a longer chronological perspective reveals on the contrary that the opposition served above all to the West in its efforts at self-definition, and that Easterners also made their contribution to the enterprise. Through a historical review of different cultural representations about Christianity and Islam from the origins to the present day, ranging from medieval times, the text questions misunderstandings and cultural prejudices that have been forged through the stories of travellers, diplomatic and religious of both cultures. Among the texts of modernity that most significantly symptomatize the debates on the «East», stand out the reflection of eminent thinkers of the Illustration such as Voltaire, Montesquieu, Rousseau, and Volney, and the diversity of their positions and arguments.

## **Keywords**

Clash or dialogue of civilisations, Christianity, Islam, Edward Said, Samuel Huntington

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