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Editor: Dr. Ansar Zahid Khan



(Thus do We relate to thee some stories, of what happened before – Al-Qur'ān, XX:99)



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SPECULATIVE PHILOSOPHY OF HISTORY: SOME MAJOR THEMES

MS. TANVIR ANJUM*

Philosophy of history is a distinct branch of the discipline of history, which is in many respects quite dissimilar from other branches. That is why, philosophy of history is generally found to be difficult to be situated in the discipline of history. It is a synonym for the Macro-history or Meta-history, and generally considered to be a part of historiography. Its recognition and popularity seems to be relatively declining, notwithstanding that it is an essential and integral part of the discipline of history.

The present article aims at locating the major themes of the speculative philosophy of history by investigating the fundamental concepts used by the various philosophers of history. However, it is by no means an exhaustive description of the concepts and ideas related to the subject under study.

There are two main sub-branches of philosophy of history: critical/analytical and speculative. The critical/analytical philosophy of history has evolved during the twentieth century, and thus, gained currency quite recently as compared to the speculative philosophy of history. Critical philosophy of history tends to explore the specific nature of historical knowledge and understanding, and the presuppositions upon which historical inquiries are based.¹ It critically assesses and examines the methods of historians and their writings. The critical philosophers of history are more concerned with questions such as objectivity/subjectivity in historiography, the role of narrative in history, and the various approaches employed by the historians in their historical studies.

The speculative philosophy of history attempts at philosophizing the human past, whereby it speculates and reflects on the general pattern of

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human past, and then hypothesizes on the basis of inferences made thereby. It involves a philosophical reflection upon the human past as a whole (and in some cases future as well). It tries to offer a philosophical explanation and interpretation of the human past. In other words, it is an attempt to philosophically view the human past in a holistic manner, which includes speculation, and reflection on the general pattern of human history. It seeks to "understand history in its wholeness, the principles by which it is governed and the meaning it may conceal. The totality of the endeavours to understand history and to integrate it into the wholeness of human existence ... is called *philosophy of history*."²

Speculative philosophy of history searches for some regularities or regular patterns in human history in order to, first, hypothesize or make some generalizations about the past, and about the causes of change in the past, and secondly, periodize history in varied stages, periods or epochs if possible on the basis of watersheds or distinct changes in human past. Often, it not only involves a philosophical reflection upon the human past, but includes future in its scope as well. Thus, it tries to offer a philosophical explanation and interpretation of the past, and in most cases, predicts and foresees a trajectory for future in the light of inferences and generalizations about the past. Generally, St. Augustine (354-430 A.D.), the author of *The City of God (De Civitate Dei)*, is considered to be its founder, though the term 'philosophy of history' was coined much later by a French thinker, Voltaire (1694-1778 A.D.) in the eighteenth-century.³

Some Major Themes in Speculative Philosophy of History

The key-concepts of speculative philosophy of history dates back to the ancient times. Their genesis goes back to the religio-philosophical traditions of ancient times, such as those of Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Taoism, Confucianism, Zoroastrianism, Judaism, Hebrew Traditions and Christianity. So the religio-philosophical systems of the ancient world were the historical antecedents of later speculative philosophies of history.

The list of speculative philosophers of history is quite lengthy. Important among them include St. Augustine, Giambattista Vico, Ibn Khaldūn, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, Auguste Comte, Karl Marx, Max Weber, Oswald Spengler and Arnold Toynbee, etc. These thinkers propounded varied and diverse philosophies of history, but some themes are consistent and recurring in them. Some of these themes are discussed hereunder:

Concept of Time and its Possible Trajectories

One of the fundamental key-concepts used in the speculative philosophy of history is the view about time and its movement. In fact, speculative philosophy of history takes an overall and general view of the movement of time. In doing so, it not only reflects upon the advance of time in the past, in its light, it also attempts to predict about the future course. For this reason, speculative philosophy of history is marked with a high degree of speculation, and is based on certain presumptions about the past and the future.

Many philosophies of history had a concept of finite time, and promulgated a definite beginning and an absolute end to it. It is important to bring to forefront that generally the philosophies of history, which had their origin in the occidental religio-philosophical systems such as Zoroastrianism, Judaism, Christianity and Islam, accept the idea of finite time, whereas the philosophies of history originating from the oriental religio-philosophical system such as Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Taoism, and Confucianism(?) did not share this idea. As a matter of fact, they had an altogether different concept of time.*

To the proponents of the idea of finite time, human history was squashed in between its beginning and end. For instance, for St. Augustine, history was situated or stretched between the beginning and conclusive end of time.⁴ In fact, the birth of Adam was believed to signify the exact beginning of time. In a similar manner the question of the end and final destiny of human beings was also dealt with. To explain the end of time, the occidental philosophies of history (those influenced by Zoroastrianism, Judaism, Christianity and Islam) propounded the concept of a sudden end of the world and the human race in a catastrophic manner. The idea is referred to as 'apocalypse', particularly in Judeo-Christian doctrines. St. Augustine, being the proponent of the Christian philosophy of history, too promulgated this idea.⁵

However, the term apocalypse is also referred to the foresight about the future in general. Other speculative philosophers of history too gave their views about the finality and conclusiveness of time. In this regard, the views of Hegel and Marx, which were influenced by the principles of

*It appears that some of the Greek philosophers like the Orpheus, Pythagoreans and even Plato subscribed to the cyclic concept. For a detailed discussion see *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Chicago ed. vol. XXVIII, pp. 653-54. However, the Hindu concept of the cycle of birth and rebirth also became the basis of the caste system i.e. a permanent socio-economic stratification of society ensuring pre-eminence of the upper castes by controlling three basic sources of power in society i.e. knowledge, weapons (force) and wealth i.e. trade/agriculture — Ed.

Christian historiography, are essentially a secular transformation of the apocalyptic idea of Christianity.⁶ Though Hegel was discontented with the idea of predicting about the future, and insisted that history culminates in the present rather than in a 'future Utopia',⁷ his concept of the 'Absolute Infinite Spirit' had a sense of conclusiveness. He propounded that the world is moving towards its destiny, which is the concrete realization of the 'Absolute Infinite Spirit', achieved through a dialectical process, whereby the 'Absolute Idea' would finally be revealed or unfolded in future.⁸ Similarly, Marx's philosophy of history too envisioned ideas about the future course of history. To him, a final stage of human history would come in future, which he refers to as that of 'Advanced Communism', when there would be no private property, and hence, no classes in the society [and hence in a sense the end of history or social human evolution].⁹

Thus, it is evident that the speculative philosophers of history hypothesized the concept of time, and assumed its trajectory both in the past and in future. As a result, various sets of theories of the movement of time came to fore, which can be divided into two broad categories: cyclical and linear theories of time. The cyclical theories of the movement of time presume that historical events repeat themselves, or historical phases were repeated in cycles, whereby phenomena are restored to their original shape, form or position. In the opinion of Lacoste, the "belief that history was simply a process of eternal renewal and the myth of the eternal return stifled historical thought for centuries."¹⁰ These theories include One Grand Cycle Theory, Recurrent Cycles Theory as well as the Spiral Theory of time. The linear theories of the movement of time presuppose that historical events are never repeated. These include both Unilinear (including spiral theory suggesting progression and evolution) as well as Multi-linear Theories.

For instance, the theory of 'Abd al-Raḥmān Ibn Khaldūn (1332-1406 A.D.) explaining the rise and fall of dynasties and civilizations presumes time to be moving in a recurrently cyclical manner.¹¹ The theories of Spengler and Toynbee are also cyclical (*infra*). The theory of Giambattista Vico (1668-1744 A.D.), an Italian philosopher historian and the author of *La Scienza Nuova (The New Science)*, explaining the gradual and evolutionary development of human societies and their institutions is spiral.¹² Similarly, Hegel's concept of the movement of time is also spiral.¹³

It is important to note that movement of time in various philosophies of history cannot be exclusively interpreted by any one of these theories, but varied philosophies of history and their constituent ideas and concepts may also be interpreted with the help of more than one theories simultaneously. The concept of the movement of time in St. Augustine's

philosophy can be interpreted as both cyclical as well as linear. He sketched the image of a linear progress of history beginning from the Fall of Adam and Eve from Eden, and ending at the Day of Resurrection. He argued that events in history such as the birth of the Christ and his crucifixion would never be repeated. At the same time, his idea of time and the movement can also be interpreted in cyclical manner as well, having a One-Grand Cycle, whereby human soul separated from God was destined to reunite with Him after salvation.¹⁴

Concept of Freewill/Determinism and Theocentrism/ Anthropocentrism

Another fundamental theme of the speculative philosophy of history is the idea of freewill and determinism or historical necessity/inevitability. The former idea entails that the human beings have freewill, whereby they exercise their choices, and thus, historical events are shaped by human actions. According to the latter idea, the human beings are not endowed with freewill, and have no role in shaping and moulding the course of history. Historical events are inevitable, i.e., they are bound to happen since they have been pre-decided, preordained or predetermined. Thus, for the deterministic approach to history, the role of God or the Providence, Divine intervention, or some metaphysical power shaping and controlling the history becomes an underlying theme. For the proponents of this idea, the movement of time or the march of history is inexorable and unchangeable, being preordained. The idea of a 'grand design' in history is an integral part of the concept of determinism or historical necessity. According to this idea, "what has happened in the past has not been merely actual but necessary: necessary in the sense that each change, each event, has followed with inexorable logic and purpose from the preceding change or event, and that the entire process from the start to finish may be seen as the actualization of some latent design, divine or secular."¹⁵

Generally, the philosophy of history of Augustine is considered to be suggestive of a deterministic connotation to the progression of history, but as a matter of fact, he was among those philosophers of history who tried to reconcile the two above-said conflicting modes of thought. Though Augustine insisted that God has laid a plan or a design in history, and He never deviates from His plan,¹⁶ but he rejected the idea of inevitability of historical events, which was generally believed by the Greeks in those days. He declared that the Providence of God controls all history, but man has freewill to love God (and thus be saved) or to love self (and be

lost).¹⁷ Similarly, Vico asserted that though history is the evolution of human beings, which are governed by Divine Providence, to him the course of human history is independent of supernatural interventions, since the Providence is only immanent.¹⁸

Ibn Khaldūn did mention the role of the Divine factors in history, but he refused to take refuge in the fatalistic dogma.¹⁹ He believed in the omnipotence of God, and considered Him to be the ultimate cause of all things and phenomena, but his beliefs did not impede his historical investigation in humanistic and rational paradigm. On the contrary, the philosophies of Hegel and Marx are generally believed to have deterministic element in them.²⁰

The evolution of the historical thought, which deeply influenced the philosophy of history at various stages in human history, did not manifest a linear pattern in so far as the freewill/deterministic approach as well as the theo-centric/anthropo-centric approach was concerned. Historical thought kept on shifting its positions, rather simultaneously exhibited diverse opinions about various philosophical questions. One such critical question was the role of God or the Divine factor in human history.

In ancient times, the historical thought was largely theo-centric, placing God or the supernatural powers in its center, and revolving round it. All events were attributed to God, and their causes were sought in the will of Divine forces. It also gave way to several semi-mythical and quasi-historical explanations of historical events. This theocratic tradition of historical thought was challenged by the ancient Greek historians, among whom Herodotus and Thucydides were most notable. They insisted on a humanistic and rational interpretation of history, though some mythical explanations too found way in their works. While breaking away with the Greek traditions of theocratic/mythical historiography, Herodotus (484-425? B.C.) in his work *Historia (History)*, which was primarily focused on the Greco-Persian War, tried to give anthropocentric explanations, holding human beings responsible for the events in history.²¹ Similarly, Thucydides (460-400? B.C.), the author of *History of the Peloponnesian War*, stressed the human factor in historical interpretation, and searched for the causes of the war between the two Greek City-states of Athens and Sparta in human actions.²² The historical thought in Europe, however, witnessed a return to the theo-centric approach in St. Augustine's works, since he believed that the Providence of God controls all history (*supra*).

Ibn Khaldūn's dominant paradigm was rational-anthropocentric, and as a historian he subscribed to a rationalist philosophy. He raised and answered many historical questions and inquiries in a secular and rational manner, and employed rationalism as a method of investigation and

deduction, notwithstanding that he assigned some role to the Divine factors in history as well. Ibn Khaldūn, however, did not apply his scientific-rational method while studying the spiritual and intellectual life of societies. There, religion became a "touchstone for all his judgments, and they are all value-judgments."²³ Nonetheless, the historical explanations offered by him are predominantly rationalist and anthropo-centric.

Vico also rejected the exclusively theocratic explanation of historical events. His philosophy of history was partly theocratic and partly humanistic. Though he wrote that history or the "New Science ... must be a 'rational civil theology of Divine providence' ... new science must therefore be a demonstration, so to speak, of the historical fact of providence",²⁴ his dominant paradigm is rationalist, and anthropocentric/humanistic.²⁵ For this reason, Vico is credited with the secularization of the philosophy of history in the West.

Though Voltaire writing in the eighteenth-century France did refer to Providence, he is credited with making a "decisive step towards a total secularization of history."²⁶ He asserted that universal laws, which are unalterable and immutable, govern the historical events. In the words of Stern, "With him, Providence lost its theological character and changed into a meta-physical force. That means that with Voltaire the philosophy of history passes from its theological to its metaphysical stage."²⁷ Hegelian philosophy of history is also regarded as metaphysical one. As pointed out earlier, Hegel also mentioned the role of God in history. For him, history was a "Theodicaea", or a theodicy, and a "justification of the ways of God."²⁸ He even wrote that "God governs the world: the contents of His government, the execution of His plan, is World History."²⁹ In fact, for him, "Providence works by means of the unintended consequences of our acts. Historical change goes on 'behind the backs of persons.'³⁰ The concept of God in Hegel was abstract, and even at many places in his works, God seems to be replaced with the concept of 'Absolute Idea.' Though Hegelian approach apparently seems theo-centric, it had metaphysical and secular connotations.

In the nineteenth century, the positivist movement greatly influenced historical thought and historiography. Particularly, the views of Auguste Comte (1798-1857 A.D.), a French philosopher, significantly impacted upon the ideas about history and history-writing. As a result, metaphysical and speculative explanations were excluded from the interpretation of history. In later half of the nineteenth century, we come across Marx's interpretation of history, which was exclusively anthropo-centric and humanistic, without the slightest hint of any Divine or metaphysical or supernatural factor.

Arnold Toynbee (1889-1975), an English philosopher-historian and the author of *A Study of History* (12 volumes published between 1934-1961), argued that God is not only a historical fact; He is the supreme historical fact.³¹ For Toynbee, history appeared as a wager between God and the devil, who challenged the former to give him a free hand to corrupt human beings.³² Critics suggest that Toynbee transformed history into theology, and thus, his philosophy of history indicates a total return to the theological stage.³³

Quest for a Unitary Principle to Explain History

Last but not the least, one of the most significant themes of speculative philosophy of history is that it tries to explore regularities, continuities, or recurrent patterns in the course of history. It attempts to discern a single formula, or a unitary principle, which could explain all human history, particularly, the phenomenon of historical change. It is tantamount to searching for some universal laws governing the historical processes. Thus it "traces a process through time ... sufficiently to see the shape of the trajectories and to identify some underlying mechanisms."³⁴ In short, the philosophy of history provides for theories of historical change, which are then applied by the historians for explaining and interpreting various events of history. In order to discover the universal laws or the underlying mechanisms, and then come up with the theories of historical change, the philosophy of history has to take into account a very vast span of time. Only after perceiving time in its totality and entirety, and viewing the historical phenomena holistically that philosophers of history can theorize them, and propound various theories and perspectives about the march of history in general. Paradoxically, where the subjectivity in the approaches and perspectives of the philosophers of history as well as the speculative content and futuristic vision in the philosophy of history discredit the whole discipline of history to be treated as a social science (a science of society), these theories of historical change, which have been handed down to us for centuries from the philosophers of history, adequately qualifies history to be treated among social sciences.

St. Augustine interpreted history to be a struggle between two opposite forces of good and evil. Influenced by the idea of 'Original Sin' in Christianity, he argued that all human beings are intrinsically or inherently bad and evil-natured. It was due to this assumption that his philosophy of history is considered ethical in character. On the basis of the dichotomy

between the good and evil, (which he borrowed from the dualistic religions such as Manichaeism³⁵ and Zoroastrianism³⁶), Augustine classified people into two categories ever since the beginning of time: the 'City of God' (the heavenly City) and the 'City of Man/Satan' (the earthly City). The former refers to the people who are pious, and dominated by the love of God, whereas the latter refers to the sinful people, who are indulged in self-love.³⁷ The first representatives of these two cities/categories were Abel and Cain. For Augustine, the history of the 'City of God', beginning with Adam, is a record of meaningful growth and development through the centuries to the time of Christ, whereas the history of the "City of Man" is a history of sin, death and human failure.

In fact, in Augustine's view, the "history of mankind is the relentless, convulsive struggle that has taken place from the very beginning between the two natures of man, base and noble ... Augustinian conflict between these spheres is the archetype of all the motivating conflicts – those between Good and Evil, Egoism and Altruism, Oppressor and the Oppressed – that Western philosophies of history have been built around for the past fifteen hundred years."³⁸

Augustine was a medieval philosopher of history, who was profoundly influenced by the Christian doctrines. His theory interpreting all history to be a struggle between two opposite forces of good and evil seems to have some relevance for today. It is difficult to deny that most of the conflicts in the contemporary world are being perceived and interpreted by the conflicting parties by employing the Augustinian idioms of good and evil. The case of the on-going 'American War against Terrorism in Afghanistan' is an example in point, since each party to the conflict claims to be representing the forces of good, and brands the other party as siding with the evil forces. Thus, contradictory perspectives of good and evil are still being used to explicate and describe a conflictual situation, which proves that the theory of Augustine is valid to a certain extent even today.

Ibn Khaldūn is the first clear-headed thinker to assert that social phenomena seem to obey laws, which are as absolute as those governing natural phenomena. To him, these 'social laws' having regular and well-defined patterns could be explored in order to study the development of a society.³⁹ According to him, history (as a body of knowledge) involved making generalizations from the findings of historical events and phenomena, which are useful for the posterity. He even stated: "History, therefore, is firmly rooted in science. It deserves to be accounted (as) a branch of science."⁴⁰ For this reason, he is credited with the emergence of a science of history.

Ibn Khaldūn is also credited with taking an overall and holistic view of the human society in his scientific analysis for the first time. His theory was based on empirical evidence from various societies and countries. In particular, he induced and generalized from the rise and fall of his contemporary dynasties in West Africa, Spain and Sicily.

The first volume of his work *Kitāb al-Ibar*, (Universal History), which is titled as "*Muqaddamah*" (*Prolegomena*), is the principal source of his theory of historical change. The focal concept employed by Ibn Khaldun to explain the rise and fall of dynasties and civilizations is that of '*aṣābiyah*', which means solidarity, unity, group mind, group feeling, (binding force uniting people in a family, tribe, community, or a nation) identity, and legitimacy, ect.⁴¹ Generally, blood relationship (common ancestry/lineage) is the basis of '*aṣābiyah*', but commonality of religion may also create '*aṣābiyah*' (religious identity) among the people and act as a binding force. He contended that the rise and fall of dynasties and civilizations depended on '*aṣābiyah*'. The weakening of '*aṣābiyah*' leads to their decline and fall. If '*aṣābiyah*' disappears from a group, community, society, dynasty, state or even a civilization, the result will be its replacement by another group, community, society, dynasty, state, or civilization with a stronger '*aṣābiyah*'.⁴²

The relevance of Ibn Khaldūn's theory for today is somewhat restricted in application as compared to that of Augustine's. However, it is more coherent, plausible and comprehensive than Augustinian theory. It can beneficially be applied to interpret and explain the dynastic changes in case of monarchical structures for governance in general. In particular, the theory amply explains the shifts in power structures during the medieval times, when there were dynastic governments in tribal settings, and loyalty, allegiance and legitimacy to the ruling families used to come from the clan-based kinship. For instance, the rise and fall of various dynasties during the Sultanate era (1206-1526) in medieval South Asian history can befittingly be explained and appreciated when the theory of '*aṣābiyah*' is applied.

To Hegel, the single formula, or the unitary precept to explain all human history was the principle of 'dialectics',⁴³ a pattern that appeared recurrent to him throughout history. It was the moving force behind the movement of history. He insisted that all history was the history of thought or ideas, not of historical events or actions of human beings, since he translated the historical events as the concrete manifestation or outward expression of the ideas. To him, the whole human history (the history of ideas) revealed a pattern, which is as follows: thesis-antithesis-synthesis. The thesis-antithesis-synthesis cycle repeated itself, but not

in the same manner, since every repetition was an improvement over the previous cycle.⁴⁴

Hegel believed that history has an underlying pattern or an Idea, which is purposeful and intelligible. The author of the Idea is God. The world is moving towards its destiny, which is predetermined by God, and the destiny is the fulfillment of the Idea. The Idea is reason, which is, in fact, Divine reason (reason of God), which wanted its self-realization and self-actualization by being gradually revealed to the world through a dialectical process, whereby it is concretized and acquires a material manifestation. The process of unfolding of the Idea is progressive, and finally an "Absolute Idea" would be revealed to the human beings (see *supra*). Thus, the whole human history is the history of the unfolding of the ultimate Idea or the 'Absolute Idea.'

Hegel's theory or philosophy for interpreting the human history is more abstract than most of the philosophers of history. It has tremendous significance in terms of application. Hegel gave primacy to the ideas and human thought, rather than actions. The development of human thought through centuries can usefully be explained and understood by employing his theory. For instance, Judaism, with its rigid legality, can be taken as a thesis, and Christianity that came as its reaction can be taken as its anti-thesis, since the latter has a heightened emphasis on other-worldliness and spirituality.⁴⁵ Islam, however, can be taken as a synthesis of Judaism and Christianity, since it amalgamated the legality and spirituality in a balanced way by discarding the excesses of both. Moreover, the Hegelian theory implied that the ideas or the ideological factors are the most important agents, which bring about change in history. Many historical phenomena and changes in history can be attributed to the ideological causes. In this regard, the work of Max Weber (1864-1920), a twentieth century German thinker and sociologist, titled *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1905) can be seen as an attempt to establish the primacy of ideas as agents of historical change over other factors, (see *infra*) which also countered the Marxist assertion that economic factors are the most important determinants in causation in history.

For Marx, the mechanism underlying the whole human history, and the phenomenon manifesting regularities and recurrent occurrences was the dialectical process taking place in the realm of matter, that is, in material physical world, instead of in the realm of ideas, as Hegel had suggested. Therefore, it is referred to as "Dialectical Materialism." Engels himself called it a "materialistic conception of history."⁴⁶ In fact, Marx applied the Hegelian dialectics to the material basis of society, or the

economic infrastructure of society, which includes the production system⁴⁷ and the exchange relations.⁴⁸

Marx believed that all past history, with the exception of its primitive stage, was the history of class struggles.⁴⁹ Thus, he divided the whole human history into five distinct stages on the basis of the production system and the exchange relations. These stages include the following: primitive communism (without any class struggle), slavery (class struggle between slaves and slave-owners), feudalism (class struggle between peasants and feudal lords), capitalism (class struggle between factory-workers/proletariat and bourgeoisie/capitalists), and lastly, the stage of advanced communism, having a classless society, which was yet to come as the final stage of human history.⁵⁰ Marx argued that the second, third and fourth stages of human history represented distinct modes of production and exchange, and relations of production, and hence, distinct superstructure, which included law, morality, philosophy, political theory, forms and principles of government, religion, art, and culture, etc.

Marx further asserted that change is inherent and inevitable in history. Change becomes inevitable when modes of production and exchange and relations of production are antagonistic, or come into clash with each other. As a result of change, a new stage of history with new modes of production and exchange, and new set of relations of production commences. Citing empirical evidence to support his argument, he maintained that in the present capitalistic stage of history, the mode of production is in conflict with the relations of production. The contradiction between socialized production and capitalistic appropriation has manifested itself as the antagonism of proletariat (the working class) and bourgeoisie (the capitalist manufacturers, factory-owners). Therefore, time is ripe for a change, which would result in the inception of a new stage of history, that is, Advanced Communism.⁵¹

In a nutshell, Marx tried to establish the primacy or dominance of economic factors over other factors in history. While doing so, he was, in fact, countering the Hegelian assertion that ideas are the moving force behind history. Marx's thesis or the Marxist perspective is one of the most powerful and compelling ones. A plethora of empirical and theoretical literature has appeared on the subject, applying, verifying and contributing to his theory. Notwithstanding the criticism Marxist perspective received, it remains one of the most convincing and forceful theories for explaining and interpreting history and historical changes.

Max Weber, like other philosopher of history, too tried to view and interpret history philosophically and in a holistic manner. While doing so,

he was quite conscious of the fact that the historical developments of the west have been different from those in other parts of the world. Therefore, Weber tried to avoid making any universal generalization unlike Marx, who had generalized his thesis to all societies and to all times. Nonetheless, Weber considerably modified, contributed and added to Marxian theory, the differences he had with Marxist thought notwithstanding.

Weber stressed the role and importance of ideas in determining the progress of time. He maintained that in addition to economic factors, ideas also play an important role in bringing about historical change. He maintained that ideas have an independent existence of their own, and thus, not necessarily born out of the economic structure of a society. He recognized the significance of economic factors in history like Marx, but expanded his thesis to include ideological factors in determining historical change as well. In particular, he stressed the importance of cultural conditions for understanding the development of history.⁵² In order to substantiate his thesis, he cited the example of the rise of capitalism in the West as the result of some ideas – namely, (i) the protestant work ethics, which emphasize hard work, and (ii) change in the value of poverty.⁵³ In fact, the dialogue between Marx and Weber has firmly established the practice of searching for the priority of causes in historical studies.

In early twentieth century, the ideas of Oswald Spengler (1880-1936), a German thinker and the author of *The Decline of the West* (1917), considerably contributed to the historical thought, and consequently, to the philosophy of history. Like Weber, he was also conscious of the fact that the historical developments of the West have been different from those in other parts of the world. Therefore, he also avoided making any universal generalization about history and historical change.

For Spengler, culture constituted the basic frame of reference, and he asserted that cultures are “organisms, and world history is their collective biography ... Culture is the prime phenomenon of all past and future world history.”⁵⁴ He interpreted history with the help of his theory of culture-cycles. While exploring the differences and similarities among various cultures, he propounded the idea that different cultures were equal in their history and followed a similar pattern of rise, growth, decline and fall. Nonetheless, he challenged other Euro-centric views of the day, and argued that each culture had its peculiar self-expression, and hence, each culture in its deepest essence different from other cultures. Moreover, each culture is limited in duration and self-contained. Each culture has its own equally valid view of the reality. Spengler believed in cultural

relativity⁵⁵ when the hegemonic western cultural supremacy was not easy to be challenged.

The philosophy of history by Arnold Toynbee (1889-1975), an English philosopher-historian and the author of "*A Study of History*", also explores an underlying pattern persistently repeating itself in history. Employing the concept of civilization as his basic unit of analysis or frame of reference, he maintained that the history of all past civilizations, particularly their genesis, growth, decline and disintegration could be explained with the help of his 'Theory of Challenge and Response.' Presuming that the histories of all civilizations were in some sense parallel, he thoroughly analyzed and undertook comparative studies of twenty-six civilizations from where he generalized his observations to form a theory.

According to this theory, if a civilization 'creatively' responds to a challenge, it will sustain and grow, but if a civilization fails to adequately and creatively respond to it, it will gradually decline and disintegrate. A 'creative minority' responds to the challenges since all members of a society are unable to do so.⁵⁶ The creative minority must come up with ever-new responses to ever-new challenges. A civilization must continue to undergo challenge-response-mimesis cycle all the time in order to grow and develop further. If the process stops, decline will set in the civilization.

It may be noted that the concept of time and its movement, its possible trajectories, the issues of theo/anthropo-centrism, the questions of freewill/determinism, and the quest for a principle or mechanism underlying the whole human history remained a persistent theme in various philosophies of history. An event in history can be interpreted by one or more than one theories or philosophies of history. These theories help to explain and elucidate the historical events. Thus, the significance and utility of these theories based on the regularities or regular patterns of the past cannot be over-emphasized for the discipline of history in general in terms of interpreting and explaining varied phenomena of history.

Notes and References

1. "Philosophy of History", *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica*, vol. 8, Chicago, *Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc.*, 1981, pp. 964-65. For details see W. H. Walsh, *An Introduction to Philosophy of History*, Hutchinson, London, 1967, pp. 17-26.
2. Alfred Stern, *Philosophy of History and the Problem of Values*, Mouton and Co. S-Gravenhage, The Hague, 1962, p. 39.
3. For Voltaire, it meant nothing more than an independent, critical and

- scientific history. R.G. Collingwood, *The Idea of History*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1978, p. 1.
4. Johan Galtung and Sohail Inayatullah (ed.), *Macro-history and Macro-historians: Perspectives on Individual, Social, and Civilizational Change*, Praeger, Westport, 1997, pp. 21-22.
 5. For details see Grace Cairns, *Philosophies of History*, Peter Owen Limited, London, 1963, pp. 215-5.
 6. *Ibid.*, p. 280.
 7. Collingwood, *The Idea of History*, p. 114.
 8. For details see Walsh, *An Introduction to Philosophy of History*, pp. 135-40.
 9. For details see Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, "Manifesto of the Communist Party", in *Karl Marx and Frederick Engels: Selected Works*, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1968, pp. 46-53.
 10. Yves Lacoste, *Ibn Khaldun: The Birth of History and the Past of the Third World*, Verso, London, 1984, p. 162.
 11. Fuad Baali, *Society, State, and Urbanism: Ibn Khaldun's Sociological Thought*, State University of New York Press, Albany, 1988, p. 69. For details see pp. 69-82. However, Muhsin Mahdi argues that Ibn Khaldun rejected both linear and cyclical theories of culture. Muhsin Mahdi, *Ibn Khaldun's Philosophy of History: A Study in the Philosophic Foundation of the Science of Culture*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1964, p. 255.
 12. Cairns, *Philosophies of History*, pp. 351-52.
 13. Collingwood, *The Idea of History*, pp. 114-5.
 14. Cairns, *Philosophies of History*, p. 255.
 15. Robert A. Nisbet, *Social Change and History: Aspects of the Western Theory of Development*, Oxford University Press, London, 1969, p. 76.
 16. *Ibid.*, p. 69, also see pp. 76-85.
 17. Cairns, *Philosophies of History*, p. 252.
 18. Galtung and Inayatullah, *Macro-history and Macro-historians*, p. 38.
 19. Lacoste, *Ibn Khaldun*, p. 193.
 20. Carr, for instance, believes that the philosophies of Hegel and Marx are "allegedly deterministic." In fact, Carr has tried to reconcile the freewill and deterministic schools of thought in history. E. H. Carr, *What is History*, Macmillan, London, 1962, p. 85.
 21. Noah Edward Fehl, *History and Society*, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong, 1964, p. 5.
 22. Miriam Bernheim Conant, tr. & ed. "Thucydides and the Historical Narrative", in *Politics and History: Selected Essays by Raymond Aron*, The Free Press, New York, 1978, p. 21. Also see *Ibid.*, pp. 166-67.
 23. Lacoste, *Ibn Khaldun*, p. 183.
 24. Vico as quoted in Fehl, *Philosophies of History*, p. 209.

25. Giovanni Battista Vico, *The New Science of Giambattista Vico*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca/New York, 1968, passim. (First published 1744)
26. Stern, *Philosophies of History and the Problem of Values*, p. 59.
27. *Ibid.*, p. 60. Stern adds that after Voltarie, Antonine Nicholas Condorcet (Marquis de Condorcet), a French Utopianist thinker, further secularized the philosophy of history, and with him, "God disappeared from the philosophical interpretation of history." *Ibid.*
28. G.W.F. Hegel, *Philosophies of History*, Dover Publications Inc., New York, trans. J. Sibree with prefaces by Charles Hegel and an introduction by C.J. Friedrich, 1956, p. 15.
29. G.W.F. Hegel, as quoted in Stern, *Philosophies of History and the Problem of Values*, p. 61.
30. Peter Manicas, *A History and Philosophy of the Social Sciences*, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1987, p. 88.
31. Stern, *Philosophies of History and the Problem of Values*, p. 62.
32. For a detailed discussion see Arnold Toynbee, *A Study of History*, Revised & abridged by Arnold Toynbee and Jane Caplan, Weathervane Books, New York, 1972, pp. 97-109.
33. Stern, *Philosophy of History and the Problem of Values*, pp. 61-62.
34. Galtung and inayatullah, *Macro-history and Macro-historians*, p. 3.
35. In 3rd century A.D. Mānī (d. 274 or 277) in Babylonia (then part of the Persian Empire) founded a dualistic religion called Manichaenism. He taught a strict dualism, affecting spirit and matter. According to him, good and evil are separate and opposed principles. He also used the metaphor of Light and Darkness for Goodness and Evil respectively. Manichean thought later influenced St. Augustine's philosophy of history.
36. Zoroastrianism, which originated in ancient Persia, is a dualistic religion having the concept two Gods: Ahuramazda (God of Good) and Ahriman (God of Evil). Zoroastrianism greatly influenced Judaic/Hebrew thought, and then through it influenced the Western thought. The early Christian thinkers like Augustine borrowed the dichotomy of good and evil from it.
37. Cairns, *Philosophy of History*, p. 254.
38. Nisbet, *Social Change and History*, pp. 85-86.
39. Mohammad Iqbal Chaudhry, "Ibn-I-Khaldun as a Sociologist", in *The Socio-cultural Problems of Pakistan: A Selection of Articles*, Zarreen Book Agency, Lahore, 1967, p. 113.
40. Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddimah*, vol. 1, p. 6 as quoted in Lacoste, *Ibn Khaldun*, *op. cit.*, p. 170. For a detailed discussion see pp. 159-71.
41. Baali, *Ibn Khaldun's Sociological Thought*, pp. 43-44.
42. Lacoste, *Ibn Khaldun*, *op. cit.*, pp. 110-17. Also see for details, Mahdi, *Ibn Khaldun's Philosophy of History*, pp. 196-204.
43. Dialectic may be defined as a struggle between two opposite forces.

- Hegel believed that phenomena are known because of their opposites. It is also defined as the 'law of strife, interpenetration, and unity of opposites', or the 'law of the negation of negation.' Dialectic includes the methods of analysis (breaking down a whole in small parts) and synthesis (a blend of two, or reconciliation of two).
44. Walsh, *An Introduction to Philosophy of History*, pp. 136-7.
 45. Allama Muhammad Iqbal, "The Principle of Movement in the Structure of Islam", in *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, Sang-e-Meel Publications, Lahore, 1996, p. 145.
 46. Frederick Engels, "Socialism: Utopian and Scientific", in *Karl Marx and Frederick Engels: Selected Works*, p. 417.
 47. Modes/means of production and exchange constitute the basis of all social structure. These include (i) what is produced, (ii) how it is produced, and (iii) how the products are exchanged. They determine the relations of production. *Ibid.*
 48. The exchange relations or the relations of production include (i) how wealth is distributed, and (ii) how society is divided into classes according to the pattern of wealth distribution. Relations of production result in the creation of two distinct classes in society, the haves (possessing) and the have-nots (non-possessing), and thus, bind human beings in command and obedience relationship. *Ibid.*
 49. Marx and Engels, "Manifesto of the Communist Party", *op. cit.*, p. 35, Engels, "Socialism: Utopian and Scientific", p. 415.
 50. Scott Gordon, *The History and Philosophy of Social Sciences*, Routledge, London and New York, 1991, p. 319.
 51. For details see Engels, "Socialism: Utopian and Scientific", pp. 399-434.
 52. Galtung and Inayatullah, *Macro-history and Macro-historians*, p. 85.
 53. For details see Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and Spirit of Capitalism*, tr., Talcott Parsons, Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1958.
 54. Oswald Spengler, *The Decline of the West*, Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., New York, 1926, pp. 104-05.
 55. Galtung and Inayatullah, *Macro-history and Macro-historians*, p. 98.
 56. Toynbee, *A Study of History*, p. 224.