

THE POSSIBILITY OF META-HISTORY

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Abstract

This paper evaluates the post modernist critique of Enlightenment rationality. It argues that the universal claims of Enlightenment epistemology have been effectively deconstructed. However, a universal rationality is possible and Imam Ibn Khaldun's work on history provides a basis for explications of universal rationality.

Research

The basic purpose of this paper is an epistemological one. The question which will be discussed in this paper is whether we are epistemologically capable of transcending our historical particularity and cultural specificity. If the answer is yes, then what is the epistemological instrument we have, which makes this transcendence possible. If the answer is no, this means that "truth" and "goodness" both are historically specific and culturally determined and we all are the subjects of historical processes. The second position creates an epistemological dilemma; if truth and goodness are derived from history then what will be the criterion to assess, judge and analyze the direction of this historical process itself. We believe that it is an epistemological necessity to have a meta-historical reference point which must have the potential to provide a criterion of truth and goodness and ideals and virtues etc. which are emerging from the historical unfolding of human civilization as a whole.

This paper has been divided into two sections. In the first section we will discuss the significance of history in the determination of truth and goodness, particularly in the context of the post-modern critique of modernity and its a-historical claim of universality. In the second section we will discuss the possibility of the existence of a meta-historical reference point in Imam Ibn-I-Khaldun's system of thought. In the concluding section we will try to establish that there is an epistemological necessity for articulating a meta-historical reference to judge and assess the conception of the good which has emerged from Modernity. This means that such a meta-historical reference provides the epistemological content for the assessment of the historical process itself.

History, Truth and the Good: The post modern antique of modernity

The phenomenon of globalization has not only brought different cultures together but it has also revitalized the issue of identity. People become aware about similarities and differences between cultures and individuals. Multi-culturalism is claimed to be a realistic framework to reconcile the differences among cultural particularities. This contemporary discourse of multi-culturalism and diversity of comprehensive doctrines has emerged from the epistemological crisis faced by the modernists due to the “collapse of the enlightenment, project on a world historical scale” (Gray 1991 p 176). Enlightenment thought in general and Modernist thought in particular considers “rationality” as a fundamental criterion for determining the “truth-value”: or objectivity of a moral theory and a political stance. The Modernists believe that the essence of man lies in his “rationality”. Thus rationality was considered to be a fundamental basis of agreement among persons and justified the cross cultural application of rationally derived “truths”. Such truth is claimed to be absolute, certain, universal and most importantly a historical. The intellectual outcome of this Modernist assumption is that it is believed that the, “theory guarantees that a moral belief that cannot be justified to the mass of mankind is irrational” (Gray 1991 p2). The absolutist or universalist posture of modern thought rested upon the assumption of universally valid reason and the epistemological possibility of its cross cultural application. This epistemologically grounded stance of universalism undermines the significance of cultural particularity, historical specificity and the role of traditions in the constitution of the good. This the historical bent of Modernism has developed an organic relation between self-perfection and public policy through the instrument of universally valid reason. Modernist reliance on universally valid reason compels this ideology to provide a framework in which, “human beings will shed their traditional allegiances and their local identities and unite in a universal civilization grounded in generic humanity and a rational morality” (Klinger 2004 p 122).

The Modernist discovers the essence of humans in their rationality. This anthropocentric essentialism has questioned the epistemological legitimacy of traditional-religious authority. Modernity claims to possess an epistemological criterion which has the potential to emancipate the human subject from traditional and religious frameworks to determine the meaning of life and the telos of existence. The detachment of the modern subject from traditional religious epistemology and the emergence of secularization are the unintended consequences of this alternative epistemology. Under concepts of “nature” and “culture” the yoke of modern rationalization “the subject is forced to take up the god-like position of a transcendental nodal point in order to ensure the unity and totality of being and experience” (Klinger 2004 p 122). According to Klinger concepts like “origin” and “traditions” were substituted by because of the former religious and mythological connotation. The idea of origin presumes the act of creation which “refers to a transcendental anchorage mediated to the present through the chain of traditions” (Lerner 1954 p 94). This replacement has specific epistemological and ontological underpinnings.

The continental rationalists believe in the unlimited potential of human rational faculty. They try to resolve metaphysical questions through the epistemological instrument of universally valid reason. Kant was the first Enlightenment thinker who

acknowledges the limits of human reason. Kant has not only successfully reconciled the epistemological antagonism between rationalism (as postulated by Descartes and Spinoza) and empiricism (of Locke, Berkeley and Hume) he also acknowledges the limits of human reason. He identifies the epistemological incapacity of universally valid reason to understand the noumena (i.e. the realm of reality which is not empirically accessible). "Kant calls things in themselves as "Noumena", because they are the entities of the understanding to which no object of experience can ever correspond and contrasts them with phenomena" (Korner 1956 p 66). Kant believes that the categories of reason are only applicable to phenomena i.e. to the empirical. The application of pure rational categories to the objects which are not subject to perceptions can not provide any knowledge. In this epistemological framework "any attempt of metaphysicians to achieve knowledge in this manner is doomed to failure" (Korner 1956 p 66). Since metaphysical objects are noumenal therefore Kant believes that knowledge of "metaphysical of this sort is at most a universal disposition to theoretical hallucinations which must be diagnosed and cured" (Korner 1956 p168). But this does not mean that he undermines the capacity of human reason.

Man according to Kant has been equipped with reason therefore he must not be influenced by instincts; rather "he must produce everything out of himself" (Kant 1993 p 24). He believes that "Reason in a creature is a faculty of which it is characteristic to extend the laws and purposes involved in the use of all its powers far beyond the sphere of natural instincts" (Kant 1933 p 24). Despite the fact that Kant acknowledge the limits of Rationality, and does not abandon the possibility of universally valid reason and its legitimate applicability in the domain of phenomena, which provides the epistemological ground for universalist claims, particularly, his idea of the categorical imperative provides an absolute, certain and universal basis for moral imperatives. He has a universalistic conception of history which rests upon the epistemological ground of reason. He believes that, "the history of (the) human race, viewed as a whole may be regarded as the realization of a hidden plan of nature to bring about political constitution internally and for this purpose, also externally perfect, as the only state in which all the capacities implanted by her in mankind can be fully developed" (Kant 1933 p 39). The process of history is judged by its compatibility to the rational laws. Kant believes that it will be mistaken to assume that "nature even in the play of human freedom does not proceed without plan and design" (Kant 1933 p12). We may imply that it is a philosophical attempt to workout the universal history of the human race which is compatible with the plan of nature. Kant thinks "the universal history of the world according to the plan of nature in its aiming at a perfect civil union must be regarded as possible and as even capable of helping forward the purpose of nature" (Kant 1933 p 32). However, he acknowledges that , "the idea of universal history is no doubt to a certain extent of an a-prior character" (i.e. Rational) (Kant 1933 p 32). (emphasis added).

The major thrust of the philosophy of history within the Enlightenment tradition is rationalistic. Enlightenment thinkers were influenced by the discoveries in the realm of physical sciences. It is because of this that they generally believe that in order to resolve social problems we have to use scientific methodology. For instance the Hegelian approach

towards the understanding of history rested upon the assumption that, “the underlying structure of the world could be understood by grasping the content of certain fundamental concepts or categories, these being related to one another in such a manner as to form a self-determining series or progression” (Gardner 1933 p 59).

There is no doubt that Hegel tries to establish a metaphysical framework for the understanding of history as a whole, despite the fact that Kant abandons the possibility of the epistemological grounding of metaphysics. Hegel claims to have discovered the law of history through the process of dialectical reasoning. It is important to note that since the phenomenal world is epistemologically accessible within the Kantian framework human history is the concretization or the expression of the absolute in the Hegelian context. Hence by postulating the imminence of the absolute or spirit, Hegel reduces the contradiction between transcendence and imminence and everything become phenomenal. This means that the phenomenal world is the expression of ideal relationships, and these are interpretable through the framework of logic. Therefore Hegel believes that, “nature and spirit, nature and mind must be treated as confirming to similarly dialectical laws” (Gardner 1933 p 59).

Despite this, Hegelian dialectical law is the product of a specific historical age, but interestingly he considers himself as the last philosopher because he thinks that somehow he has discovered the internal law of human history as a whole and the epistemological instrument which makes this wonder possible is “logic”. In this sense, this law is itself a historical. Hegel considers his method as “a science of pure thought” (Catlin 1939 p 490). This reflects the modern spirit of his thought. His idea of history because of its meta-historical temperament provides the theoretical ground of not only the understanding of history but of understanding all domains of human intellectual endeavors. For instance this methodology is claimed to be workable “to develop an unprecedented political philosophy ... like geometry in its coherence in which human philosophical thought would reach systematic expression” (Catlin 1939 p 490).

Marx has eliminated the idealistic content of the Hegelian dialectical method. The Marxist idea of history rests upon the assumption that dialectical methodology is essentially scientific. It is because of this positivistic approach, that secularization and material progress are theoretical corollaries of scientific socialism as expounded by Marx. It is an acknowledged fact that through the framework of historical materialism, Marx in effect redrew the map of history. Marx was influenced by Holback’s idea of generalities which enabled him to conceptualize historical materialism as “a doctrine applicable like a science, to all phases of social and political life” (Catlin 1939 p 460). The Marxist scientific explanation of the historical process presumes a “law” (which despite the fact that it has been discovered by an individual, i.e. Marx, who himself was the product of his own historical material conditions) is actually a-historical and provides, such an objective framework for historical understanding that it will be “difficult for historians even to look at their subject in quite the same fashion as they had done before” (Gardner 1933 p 14). Since historical process is governed by a-historical law which is itself meta-historical, thus in this context the historical person is for Marx only the exponent of historical forces (i.e. material forces). This implies that the agent of history that is

individual “does not make history, he executes it”. This is also true for Hegel. This a-historical and universalistic potential of Marxist historical materialism is a manifestation of Modernist epistemology.

And his epistemological reliance on scientific methodology unveils its organic relation with the epistemological legacy of Modernity. It is reasonable to claim that both extremely powerful ideas of history expanded by Hegel and Marx (irrespective of how scientific, logical and rational they were) are actually teleological. The telos for Hegel is rational progress, and for Marx it is material progress. This reveals a theoretical nexus between a-historical frameworks and “telos”, on the basis of this we may hold that any a-historical framework must necessarily be teleological.

This theoretical amalgamation of a-historicity and teleology revitalizes the traditional philosophical problem regarding the priority of ontology over epistemology. The real issue is whether the “telos” determines the a-historical principle which explains the historical movement itself. Or the a-historical principle itself determines the telos of historical movement. This problem must be resolved for an epistemologically viable historical analysis. And one can imagine the gravity of the epistemological situation because both “telos” and the “a-historical principle” are derived by the individual who is ontologically situated in a particular historical context, a subject of the historical process himself.

The purpose of Enlightenment thought was the realization of freedom and the instrument which made that universal freedom realizable was presumed to be reason. This quest for freedom has questioned the epistemological priority of traditional forms of authorities (i.e. God, Church, revelation, tradition etc) “Kant ... describes the Enlightenment as the movement when humanity is going to put its own reason to use, without subjugating itself to any authority” (Foucault 1976 p 18). The epistemological reliance of Enlightenment thinkers in general over transcendental conception of reason rests upon the assumption that the essence of the human lies in its rationality. This fundamentalist approach has not only rationalized the whole socio-cultural fabric of the Western world but has also established the institutional framework for the realization of freedom and progress (the transformation of the world into heaven through the application of universally valid reason). Their faith in human rationality enables the Modernists to replace God by rational man, “all that Christian theology says is absolutely true, provided it is applied not to a transcendental and imaginary God, but to Man himself (Descomber 1988 p 29).

The twentieth century experience has shattered the epistemological authority of reason and has also questioned the universalizable capacity of reason. Post modern thought, “rejects the transcendental conception of reason, and puts forth conceptions of reason, which are ungrounded and lack ultimate justification” (Lyotard 1985 p XXIV).

The post-modernists do not abandon the possibility of being rational. They consider reason to be “a thing of this world” and reject its transcendental capacity. This

post modernist conception of reason not only undermines the Enlightenment project and its institutions but most importantly also the epistemological basis of modern thought. The philosophical rejection of the possibility of transcendental reason, transforms the epistemological discourse of Modernity and the justification of the institutions. Megill acknowledges that, “yet for all its importance in defining our problems and justifying our institutions, my guess is that, the primacy of the Enlightenment, its importance in setting the terms of our discourse will not continue much longer” (Megill 1984 p 340).

Post modernists, claim that the modernist conception of the epistemological priority of universally valid reason undermines the possibility of human freedom. They believe that freedom is not achieved through transcendental rationality because the rational identifies the realm of necessity. They argue that modernity is the continuation of the traditional form of authoritarianism. It replaces revelational authority by the authority of transcendental reason. This ontologically grounded epistemological priority of transcendental reason according to the Post-modernists is the legacy of the Christian ideas of authority. This conception of reason provides the epistemological framework of transcendental subjectivity, universality, necessity and essentialism.

The Post-modernists reject the modernist thirst for grounding, foundation and essence by the abandonment of transcendental reason which provides a-historical criterion for all kinds of evaluations. The Post-modernist conception of reason is ungrounded, and lacks ultimate justification. Reason is seen as culturally specific and historically determined and it reveals the ontological ungroundedness of human being. Reason acknowledges the epistemological incapacity of the human to discover an abstract realm of absolute, certain and universal knowledge. The rejection of transcendental reason opens up a new realm of epistemological discourse, Bernstein acknowledges that, “a new conversation is now emerging among philosophers – a conversation about human rationality and as a result of this dialogue we are beginning to gain a new understanding of rationality that has important ramifications for both theoretical and practical life” (Beusteen 2001 p 74). Gadamer believes that the modernist quest for a neutral epistemological paradigm is unrealizable. For a meaningful epistemological pursuit, “what is necessary is a fundamental rehabilitation of the concept of prejudice and a recognition of the fact that there are legitimate prejudices if we, want to do justice to man’s finite, historical mode of being (Gadamer 1985 p 261). Gadamer thinks that the Enlightenment thinkers have their own prejudices but the problem is that they consider that the use of their own reason (i.e. transcendental reason) enables them to transcend the traditional bonds of authorities and prejudices. He claims that, “the distinction that Enlightenment draws between faith in authority and the use of one’s own reason is, in itself legitimate. If the prestige of authority takes the place of one’s own judgment, then the authority is in fact a source of prejudice. But this does not include the possibility that it can also be a source of truth and this is what Enlightenment failed to see when it denigrated all authority” (Gadamer 1985 p 263).

MacIntyre believes that the human telos is “vital to morality, understood as a rationally justifiable or objective enterprise, because it alone can license immediate transitions from “is” to “ought” (Mulhall 1991 p731). This means that without identifying

a “telos”, existing character traits cannot be identified as good / bad. In a nutshell without “telos” there can be no ground for morality. MacIntyre presumes an Aristotelian framework for the objective moral evaluation of human conduct. In such a framework telos is considered as a theoretical instrument which provides the basis for judging existing character and is grounded in the culture and history of a civilization.

MacIntyre believes that internal substantive values are evolved by consociational human endeavors. These internal goods cannot be realized or achieved without engaging in practice. By practice he means “any coherent and complex form of socially established cooperative human activity through which goods internal to that form of activity are realized in the course of trying to achieve those standards of excellence which are appropriate to and partially definitive of, that form of activity, with the result that human powers to achieve excellence and human conception of the ends and goods involved, are systematically extended” (MacIntyre 1981 p 175). This means that virtue by definition is communally determined. It can objectively be acquired by participation in practices and acquirement of internal goods which are specific to these practices. But participation in a practice requires that I subjugate my preferences / attitudes to the communal standards and authorities that currently defines a practice. These standards of the practices define the limits of criticism. The practice can only be criticized on the basis of the criterion that the practice itself recognizes. Moreover practices can only be criticized by the participants. Thus the judgment about the practices cannot be regarded as purely subjective or arbitrary, in other words moral judgments are not of emotive nature.

Participation is intrinsically a shared project based on communally and historically determined standards. It creates a valuable form of life which has objective grounds to differentiate between meaningful and meaningless forms of life. There can be many practices with different internal goods and evaluations within them. These practices can be based on norms / procedures inherent in them. But there is no basis for objectively evaluating one practice against another. Thus objective moral evaluation is possible and it can only be possible within a culturally specific paradigm. Therefore MacIntyre rejects any claim on the basis of universally valid reason. MacIntyre believes that “participation in such shared projects, acceptance of such communally and historically determined standards initiate the individual into forms of life in which human judgments of worth are immune to the threat of emotivism (MacIntyre 1981 p 137). This means that the meaning of any event can be grasped by relating it to the history of the performer’s life and contextuality of the act which is being performed. In a nutshell “being / life is lived historically”. Life is lived both in response to (unpredictable / arbitrary) developments and teleological struggle to achieve some purpose. It implies that the particular history of the individual determines the purpose of his life. For instance when I am confronted with the question, shall I be a chess player or a father? I can only prefer one practice over another on the basis of what is more consistent with the history of my life (in a particular cultural context). Since in the Modernist specially Kantian framework the person is standing outside history therefore on the one hand there can be no such thing as moral

personal development and on the other hand he is incapable (ontologically) of pursuing an objectively determined purpose.

The incompatibility between the priority of right (over the good) and the possibility of moral growth is explored by liberal communitarians. Communitarians in general and Taylor and MacIntyre in particular believe that conceptions of the good have been derived by the evaluation of moral intuitions namely “strong evaluations”. By strong evaluation Taylor means “discriminations of right and wrong in terms of standards that are independent of our desires and preferences and that allow us to evaluate their worth (Mulhall 1991 p 131). The strong evaluation is in one sense rational and on the other hand aesthetical, rational in the sense that the evaluation of the moral intuitions takes place within a social matrix of a particular linguistic community with a specific concept of the “rational”. It is possible to rationally order and determine the worth of different competing conceptions of the good on the basis of its coherence with the meta-ethical narrative. These supra-rational, meta-ethical narratives provide the substance of rational ordering in a specific community; they have emerged from the history of a particular community. Therefore there is no possibility of rational ordering of the conceptions of good among two different communities. In this context that objectively rational ordering of the conceptions of the good is possible within an intra-communal paradigm and aesthetical in the context of the extra-communal sphere. In a nutshell the preferences of one language community cannot be rationally evaluated by that of an other community. This incommensurability is due to the experiential differences of the historical experience of one community to that of an other. Thus moral growth is possible within a particular civilization. It is possible only to differentiate between people on the basis of the reflection in their moral life of the “ontological truths” which are considered to be valid in that civilization alone.

Taylor pointed out that every individual has many conceptions of the good in his life, and sometimes these conceptions are in conflict with each other. So there is a need of a traditional reordering of these conceptions of the good. This hierarchical categorization of different conceptions is possible on the basis of a good which is relatively superior to others. Qualitatively higher-order goods are called “hyper-goods”. This reordering of goods is not a subjective phenomena, it has an objective basis, which is ontologically backed and historically grounded. The communitarian rejection of moral subjectivism in general and the notion of the unencumbered self in particular is based on their presumption that without having an ontologically grounded conception of the good it is not possible to derive abstract principles of justice. Taylor believes that the individual’s self identity, his conceptions of the good and his historical specificity are all ontologically linked with each other. He claims that the hyper goods “usually arise through a historical suppression of earlier (conceptions of the good. Mulhall 1991 p 119). This means that the hyper-goods endorse the justification of hierarchy among different conceptions of the good. This reordering of the good is not the manifestation of emotivist or subjective inference of personal preferences / desires. This transvaluation is based on practical reason. Taylor believes that “practice; reasoning ... is a reasoning in transition. It aims to establish, not that some position is correct absolutely but rather that some position is superior to some other (Taylor 1990 p 92). The contestability of interpretations on the

basis of meta-ethical narratives makes it possible to realize a way of life in which “we have lived a transition which we understand as error-reducing and hence as epistemic gain (Taylor 1990 p 71). This makes objective transvaluation possible by practical reasoning. Thus we find a reconciliation of relativism and objectivism in a moral context, relativistic in the sense that there is a legitimate transformation among different conceptions of the good and objective in the sense that the contestability among different conceptions of the good is based on practical reasoning specific to a history / culture. This conciliation essentially negates moral subjectivism and universalism. The rejection of universalism culminates in the transition to practical reasoning. The natural corollary of this transition is that the derivation of a-historical abstract principles of justice is not possible. This rejection is the rejection of the Archimedean position and Rawlsian original position, the paradigm which makes the operation of external reason possible. It implies that the contestability of interpretations among different conceptions of the good is only meaningful within a historically specific linguistic community. This means that transvaluation of hyper-goods is possible due to the participation of within a linguistic matrix of a community which is prior to the individual. The conception of hyper-good negates the neutrality of the good because” (it) presents us with a good which challenges and displaces others” (Taylor 1950 p 721). This is one of the reasons that hyper-goods are considered as a source of conflict “they presuppose an ultimate intolerance of the other goods to which they assign lower rank” (Mulhall 1991 p 115). This intolerance has an epistemological basis which justifies “moral growth”. “A hyper-good involves our changing, a change which is qualified as ‘growth’, or ‘satisfaction’ or ‘higher consciousness’ and even involves one repudiating earlier goods” (Taylor 1990 p 70). Thus we find a rejection of emotivism and justification, of objective relativism because the repudiation of one good in favor of the other has historically specific and ontologically grounded objective justification. Since the hyper-goods “have usually arisen through a historical suppression of earlier, less adequate views; they present themselves as steps to a higher moral consciousness (Mulhall 1991 p 115). Thus the conception of the hyper-good legitimizes “moral growth”.

From the above discussion we can imply that the epistemological priority of universally valid reason is not only questioned by Post modernists but this idea has also been replaced by culture specific and historically determined reason in post modernist discussion. If this is true, then in contemporary discourses it is very difficult if not impossible to find an epistemological source which can provide a meta-historical criterion to judge the movement of the historical process itself.

II Meta History and Imam Ibn-e-Khaldun

Khaldunian socio-political analysis is relevant to addressing the epistemological problem with which we are dealing . It can provide an epistemological basis for generating a-historical principles for the assessment of historical processes. Despite the fact that Khaldunian socio-political theory is based on cultural specific and ethno-centric reality i.e. “Asabiya” there is in it an embodied truth which is not the product of history but is essentially a-historical. Imam Ibn-e-Khaldun claims this is an epistemologically

validated a-historical criterion which provides a normative standard for the evaluation of the historical process and the institutions which emerge from this process.

Imam Ibn-e-Khaldun believes that the state has a life of its own. He considers the state to be an organism which functions according to the law of causality. The Imam argues that the development of the state is a natural phenomenon governed by the principle of causality and necessity for the socio-cultural and political survival of a civilization. The analysis of state structure, constitution, evolution and deterioration is essential for understanding human civilization as a whole. Imam Ibn-e-Khaldun's approach views history as an organic whole. It is because of this that the Imam's thought is epistemologically relevant in the analysis of all aspects of social life and behavior. The Imam tries to eliminate the apparent antagonism among economic, social, political and theological domains, collapsing them within a single unifying metaphysical framework.

We cannot detach Imam Ibn-e-Khaldun's presumed "sociology" from his philosophy of history. In Muqaddima he tries to elucidate the history of cultures (Basharat 1967 p 39). Orientalists regard Ibn-e-Khaldun to be an original thinker, a genuine "sociologist" and a critical-historian who considers history to be an indispensable tool for the understanding and analysis of socio-cultural transformation and for understanding how axiological conflicts emerge within social systems. But they gloss over and ignore the fact that Imam Ibn-e-Khaldun's methodology does not transcend the epistemological foundations of the basic Islamic sources of knowledge (i.e. Quran and Sunnah).

Human civilization is the object of inquiry for Imam Ibn-e-Khaldun's historic investigations. Theory and "sociology" are basically intellectual corollaries of his new science of history. His methodology is fundamentally empiricist, but his empirical analysis is not detached from his religious particularity and his commitment to Islamic epistemology. It is obvious that his work "is deeply rooted in the traditional beliefs and convictions of Islam" (Rosenthal 1988 p 84).

His epistemological reliance on Quran and Sunnah enables him to reconcile empiricism and tradition. The "naturalist scientific and empiricist" dimensions of the Imam's thought have unfortunately been over emphasized by Western professionals as a result of which have sought to discover a non-existent secular aspect of the Imam's socio-political theory and cultural anthropology. On the other hand the essential role of the Quran and the Sunnah which provides the epistemological criterion for an objective analysis of socio-political structures has been totally ignored. The conception Asabiya (its constitution, its role in the establishment and disintegration of a dynasty), the Imam's political theory, his conceptions of history etc.) are sought to be understood by abstracting them from the epistemological framework of the Quran and the Sunnah. Rosenthal acknowledges that "Ibn-e-Khaldun's empiricism manifest in his "new science"

is matched by his traditionalism. His traditionalism is epistemologically grounded in Fiqh and tafsir (Rosenthal 1988 p 84).

According to the Imam the state is the natural culmination of the power struggle between different collectivities. He argues that the state is necessary for the socio-political survival of any civilization and the constitution of “Asabiya” is inevitable for the emergence of the state, i.e. it provides an essential foundation of the state. Religion provides a criterion to judge every socio-political transformation and also the direction of that transformation. The Imam acknowledges that although the weakening of religious commitment enhanced the strength and domination of the Khilafa but this deviation, “inevitably lead to its transformation into absolute monarchy in the form of the mulk (Rosenthal 1988 p 96). He thinks that the strength of Asabiya and that of religion complement each other, Asabiya provides an initial and very strong basis for the bending of like minded people which presumes ties of kinship and blood. The unification of like minded people for socio-political domination will be actualized in the form of the state. But the dynasty which emerges requires political association “ijtima” and can not survive without it (on the basis of his genealogical analysis the Imam claims that, it falls within three generations).

“The term of life of a dynasty does not normally exceed three generations (of 40 years each). For in the first generation are still preserved the characteristic features of rough, uncivilized rural life (badawa), such as hard conditions of life, ferocity and partnership on authority (majd.). Therefore the strength of the ‘Asabiya is maintained ... and men submit to their domination. In the second generation their condition has changed, under the influence of the rule (mulk) ... from rural to city-life, from a hard struggle to ease and abundance, from partnership in authority to autocracy Wherefore the strength of the ‘Asabiya is partly broken ... The third generation has forgotten the time of badawa ... as if it had never existed – unlike the second generation which lives on the memory of the first – and loses the sweetness of force and ‘Asabiya because they are in possession of power. Ease reaches its peak under them because they become used to a pleasant and abundant life ... the ‘Asabiya collapses completely, and they forget about defence, attack and pursuit (of the enemy)” (Rosenthal 1988 p 88).

There are different factors which the Imam thinks explain the disintegration of political order. Two of the most important are

1. the antagonistic relation between rural and urban life style.
2. the internal rivalry and discord leading to the disintegration of Asabiya.

It is important to note that both causes are the unintended consequences of the culmination within the State, of the internal contradiction between the “badawa” (a life of simplicity, and courage) and “hadara” (a life of ease, luxury and pleasure). This conflict undermines the strength of the state and its capacity to sustain order within the dynasty and to defend or protect it against external threats. On the other hand internal rivalries weaken natural ties and undermine Asabiya’s capacity for state self-preservation and domination.

The Imam believes that “religion by prophecy or by a call (da’wa) to its truth, is the (only) source from which great empires spring (Rosenthal 1988 p 96). State or political order without “telos” (which can transcend the naturally constituted desires or objectives of “hadara” loses its capacity to sustain and survive. The internal cohesion of Asabiya is also not necessarily invincible, and the Imam thus stresses the necessary limits of ethno-centric collectivity.

Imam Ibn-e-Khaldun’s political theory is influenced by his historical analysis of the socio-political history of Berber tribes (Almorvides and Almohad). Their transformation from rural to urban life and the stages of socio-political “development sketched by him in the Muqaddima and Kitab-al-Libas, which no doubt is a purely empirical naturalistic approach for the understanding of socio-political order. Khaldun himself was the product of his own period. But his epistemological commitment is reflected in his reconciliation of empiricist naturalism with Islamic traditionalism, “Khaldun acknowledges again and again that the dominion is as necessary as the will to power and domination as natural Power cannot be gained and without the call of religion” (Rosenthal 1988 p 96). But if the emergence of state domination is natural, its decline is also natural because of the disintegration of Asabiya due to rivalry, discord and antagonism between urban and rural life. The Imam acknowledges that it is religion alone which “unites the hearts, replaces the desire for the vanity of the world and turns men to God seeking right and truth in union” (Rosenthal 1988 p 96).

Imam Ibn-e-Khaldun argues that socio-political order can be established through taghallub (subjugation) and Qahr (force) but such domination is only temporal and leads to disaster. He thinks that the spiritual factor if not the only cause is certainly one of the most important causes of state survival and strength.

He believes that religion provides the telos which transcends culturally specific and historically determined political ideals of Asabiya. Religion not only reconciles the natural dichotomy between rural and urban life but it also reinforces the natural strength of Asabiya because the “call to religion increases the force of the Asabiya” (Rosenthal 1988 p 97).

The Imam argues that ethnic particularity is not directly in conflict with Islam. It is complementary to it. He claims that, the religious call (dawa) is not complete (and effective) without Asabiya and there is no contradiction involved in ethnic particularity and religious universality, “he quotes in his support the Hadith, “Allah did not send a prophet without the protection of his tribe” (Rosenthal 1988 p 97).

The role of religion is teleological. Religion plays a role in the determination of the meaning of ethnic collectivity and the spiritual justification of this particularity. The Asabiya is not only the natural agent of political domination, but its equation with religious conviction, “determines the nature and purpose of the Khalafa which Ibn Khaldun so, deeply recognized” (Rosenthal 1988 p 97). The religious dimension not only provides the teleological basis of a collectivity but it also provides the spiritual basis of

political hegemony because in the institution of the Khilafat, “the spiritual and temporal powers are united in the Imam” (Rosenthal 1988 p 97).

It is important to note that the complementary role of Asabiya in Imam Ibn-e-Khaldun’s framework reveals that “Khuruj” is possible only with the support of Asabiya, “only a strong attack, backed by the Asabiya of tribes and clans, can remove rulers and destroy the edifice of these states which are firmly established” (Rosenthal 1988 p 96). If such Asabiya does not exist Khuruj is not regarded as obligatory on Muslims by Imam Ibn-e-Khaldun.

The strength of Asabiya not only helps to establish political domination but can also be used as a catalyst in the realization of religiously determined telos even against the will of the mulk. Being a realistic thinker the Imam acknowledges “that a “mulk” (i.e. Kings) is capable of looking after the welfare of man in this world, (but) even this is achieved more perfectly with the aid of (the) law of the Sharia since the prophetic lawgiver knows best what is to man’s advantage both in mundane and religious matters” (Rosenthal 1988 p 76).

The Imam acknowledges that tribal and ethnic particularity provides a natural basis for establishing political order but stresses that it is the revelation and Sunnah which provides the epistemological basis for domination. In this sense Sharia provides a mechanism which not only justifies the teleological dimension of political domination but also represents a basis for evaluating the conceptions of the good which emerge from the tribal ethnic particularities of Asabiya. The source of Sharia is Quran and Sunnah which is essentially a-historical and transcends cultural and ethnic particularities. It provides an epistemological ground to circumscribe Asabiya. For instance “know that the whole world... is for the Law-giver but a way to the hereafter, for he who has no animal to ride on does not reach his goal. His {the law-giver’s} intention is not to forbid or blame man’s deeds ... or to destroy the forces altogether which produce them, but rather to change their direction towards the aims of truth as far as possible, so that all intentions become right and the direction of man’s desires and plans a single one namely, to Allah and the hereafter” (Rosenthal 1988 p 99).

This means that the epistemological significance of the Sharia has not only been recognized by Imam Ibn-e-Khaldun, he also acknowledges that Sharia and its epistemological power provides a criterion to judge the direction of the socio-political process and its natural growth and consequences. According to Rosenthal, “there can be no doubt that Ibn Khaldun gives religion (that is, in practice, the Sharia of Islam) if not the first at least a very important place in the existing state” (Rosenthal 1988 p 99). On the basis of the above analysis we may argue that in the Imam’s methodological framework, the epistemological priority of the Quran and the Sunnah set the ideal standard not only for the political process and the legitimacy of state structure but for the historical process as a whole. However due to the realist and empirical orientation of his analysis “his inquiry into Islamic history and his experience of the temporary Muslim states in the Maghrib taught him that there is always a gap between the ideal demands of Sharia and political reality” (Rosenthal 1988 p 99). But although the Imam acknowledges

that the socio-political realities in the context of changing historical conditions do not confirm to the Sharia determined ideals and norms the epistemological priority of “Sharia, its theoretical validity and overruling authority have never been (epistemologically) questioned” (Rosenthal 1988 p 99). The Quran and Sunnah provide a universal rationality despite the fact that they have been revealed and practiced in a particular history. The Sharia is thus essentially a-historical. It provides a meta-historical criterion to judge, assess and normatively evaluate existing socio-political institutions which are the product of specific historical processes. Rosenthal acknowledges that the epistemological priority of the Quran and the Sunnah in classical Muslim “jurists, like Al-Mawardi, Ibn Jama’a and Ibn-Taymiya, strove to maintain the purity of the law and showed what government ought to be in accordance with its provisions” (Rosenthal 1988 p 100). Imam Ibn-e-Khaldun’s work validates and develops this classical tradition.

Imam Ibn-e-Khaldun’s distinction between *Siyasa diniya* (government based on God’s revealed law), and *Siyasa aqliya* (government based on political laws made by rational man) is also important in understanding the epistemological priority of the Quran and the Sunnah over human rationality in his system. Rosenthal acknowledges that, “Ibn Khaldun leaves no doubt that the law of the prophetic lawgiver is best and is superior to that of the human lawgiver, who is guided only by his reason” (Rosenthal 1988 p 100).

The epistemological priority of *Siyasa diniya* is that “this world alone is not man’s goal, for it is altogether useless and vain, since its end is death and destruction. God says; “Do you think that we created you for sport?” (Sura XXIII, 117). What is intended of man is his religion, which lets him attain happiness in the hereafter as the way of God.... “The laws came which placed an obligation upon him in all his affairs, like service of God, trade and commerce, including rule (*mulk*) which is natural for human association, so that they (the laws) lead the rule towards the ways of God and everything is within the reach and range of the Sharia” (Rosenthal 1988 p 101).

III CONCLUSION

Post modernism denies the possibility of meta-history because of the inherent incapacity Enlightenment discourse about rationality to provide absolute, objective, universal and a-historical criterion. In the Post modern discourse there are no epistemological grounds for the evaluation of history.

We are thus left with a stark choice. We can either accept the anti-foundationalist, non-essentialist post-modern ungroundedness of human being, who’s rational capacity is historically specific and culturally determined. The epistemological corollary of this conception of reason (which lacks ultimate objectivity is to accept the world as it is. Post modernism cannot provide a basis for confronting oppression and injustice for Post modernism offers no arguments, no critical resources or validating grounds for perceiving anything as inherently unjust and oppressive.

On the other hand we can revert to the anti modern epistemological domain of revelational authority. Khaldunian analysis reveals that cultural specific historically

determined socio-political realities and institutions, their worth, strength and functionality, can objectively be assessed on the basis of the epistemology underlying the Sharia. This epistemology is a-historical and has the potential to act as a meta-historical criterion till the end of time. It is generally transcendental. Wittgenstein acknowledges that, “ the sense of the world must lie out side the world. In the world, everything is as it is and happens as it does happen, in it there is no value and if there were it would be of no value. If there is a value which is of value, it must lie out side all happening and being so. For all happening and being so is accidental. What makes it non-accidental cannot lie in the world, for otherwise it would be accidental. It must lie outside the world (Wittgenstein 1961 p 41).

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