



## PHILOSOPHY OF HISTORY: THE ABSTRACT VIEW

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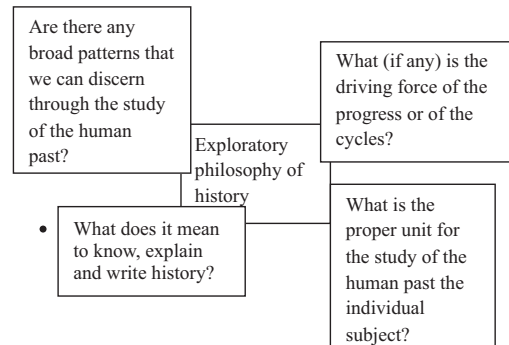
### ABSTRACT

Critical philosophy of history is the "theory" facet of the regulation of academic history, and deals with questions such as the nature of historical data, the degree to which objectivity is potential, etc. Speculative philosophy of history is an area of philosophy regarding the eventual meaning, if any, of human history. In addition, it speculates as to a possible teleological end to its development that is, it asks if there is a design, purpose, directive principle, or finality in the processes of human history. Part of Marxism, for example, is tentative philosophy of history. Another example is "historiosophy", the term coined by Gershom Scholem to explain his accepting of history and metaphysics. Though there is some partly cover between the two aspects, they can usually be distinguished; modern professional historians be inclined to be cynical about tentative philosophy of history.

**KEYWORDS:** *Critical philosophy, historiosophy.*

### INTRODUCTION

The expression philosophy of history refers to the hypothetical aspect of history, in two wits. It is regular to distinguish critical philosophy of history from tentative philosophy of history. Critical philosophy of history is incorporated under historiography. Philosophy of history should not be puzzled with the history of philosophy, which is the study of the expansion of philosophical ideas in their historical context.

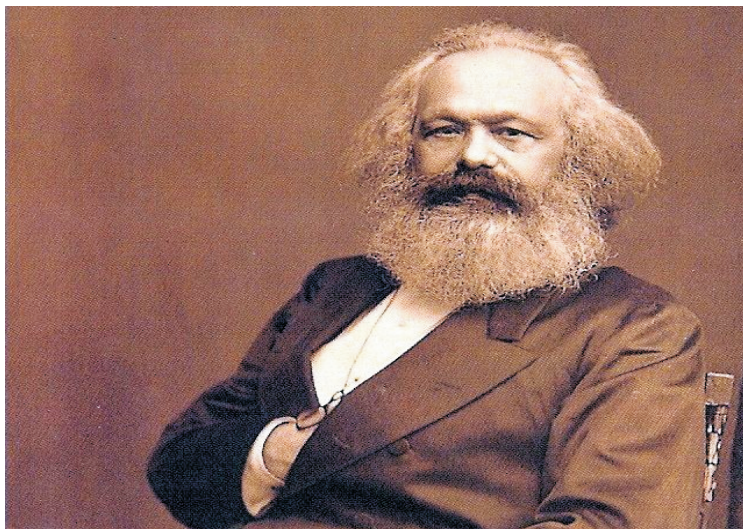


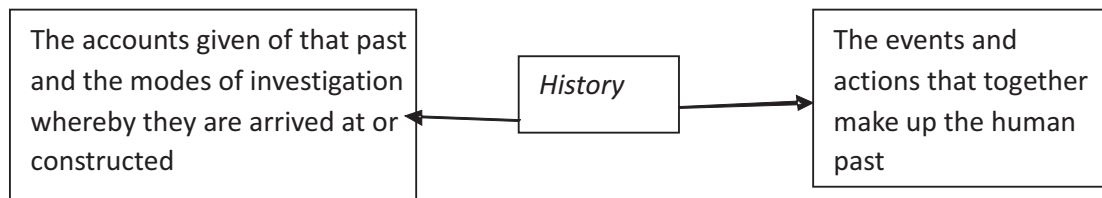
### OBJECTIVE:

To discuss the Philosophy of History in an abstract way.

### METHODOLOGY:

It is totally based on literature review.



**RESULT AND DISCUSSION:**

When used in the first sense, the word refers to what as a matter of information happened, while when used in the second sense it refers to the study and account of those happenings. The notion of philosophical mirror image upon history and its nature is as a result open to more than one interpretation, and contemporary writers have found it convenient to regard it as covering two main types of responsibility. On the one hand, they have distinguished philosophy of history in the traditional or classical sense; this is conceived to be a first-order enquiry, its subject substance being the historical process as a total and its aim being, broadly speaking, one of providing an in general elucidation or explanation of the course and direction taken by that process. On the other hand, they have distinguished philosophy of history considered as a second-order enquiry. Here attention is focused not upon the definite sequence of events themselves but, instead, upon the procedures and categories used by practicing historians in imminent and comprehending their material. The previous, often alluded to as speculative philosophy of history, has had a long and varied career; the latter, which is generally known as critical or analytical philosophy of history, did not rise to importance until the 20th century.

**CONTINENTAL PHILOSOPHY OF HISTORY**

The topic of history has been treated frequently in modern European philosophy. A long, largely German, tradition of thought looks at history as a total and comprehensible process of events, structures, and processes, for which the philosophy of history can serve as an interpretive tool. This approach, speculative and meta-historical, aims to discern large, embracing patterns and directions in the unfolding of human history, persistent notwithstanding the erratic back-and-forth of particular historical developments. Modern philosophers raising this set of questions about the large direction and meaning of history include Vico, Herder, and Hegel. A somewhat different line of thought in the continental tradition that has been very relevant to the philosophy of history is the hermeneutic tradition of the human sciences. Through their emphasis on the “hermeneutic circle” through which humans undertake to understand the meanings created by other humans—in texts, symbols, and actions—hermeneutic philosophers such as Schleiermacher (1838), Dilthey (1860–1903), and Ricoeur (2000) offer philosophical arguments for emphasizing the importance of narrative interpretation within our understanding of history.

**PHILOSOPHY OF HUMAN HISTORY:**

The belief that it is possible to discern in the course of human history some general scheme or design, some all-encompassing purpose or pattern, is very old and has found expression in various forms at different times and places. The reasons for its persistence and energy are numerous, but two very general considerations may be identified as having exercised a fairly continuous influence. It has often been supposed that, if the belief in an overall pattern is abandoned, one is obliged to acquiesce in the view that the historical process consists of no more than an arbitrary succession of occurrences, a mere agglomeration or patchwork of random incidents and episodes. It has been contended cannot be

seriously entertained, if only because it conflicts with the basic demand for system and order that underlies and governs all rational enquiries, all meaningful thought about the world. It has frequently been felt that to refuse to allow that history is finally intelligible in the required manner implies a skepticism concerning the value of human life and existence that constitutes an affront to the dignity of human nature. The 18th-century German philosopher Immanuel Kant, for example, spoke of the “repugnance” that is inevitably experienced if the past is viewed in more recent times; a comparable attitude was discernible beneath Arnold Toynbee’s uncompromising repudiation of the idea that history is “a chaotic, disorderly, fortuitous flux, in which there is no pattern or rhythm of any kind to be discerned.” Therefore, it has been the object of a long line of theorists, representative of widely divergent outlooks, to show that such pessimism is unjustified and that the historical process can, when properly viewed, be seen to be both sensibly and morally acceptable.



Arnold Toynbee, 1974

Courtesy of Oxford University Press; photograph, Fay Goodwin

### **The Philosophy Of Western Speculation And History :**

The belief that history conforms to a linear development in which the influence of providential wisdom can be discerned, rather than to a recurrent cyclical movement of the kind implicit in much Greco-Roman thought, was already becoming prevalent early in the Common Era. Traces of this approach are to be found in the conception of the past developed in the 4th century by St. Augustine in his *De civitate Dei* (*City of God*) and elsewhere; it is, for example, compared on one occasion to “the great melody of some ineffable composer,” its parts being “the dispensations suitable to each different period.” Yet the cautious subtlety of Augustine’s suggestions and the crucial distinction he drew between sacred and secular history make it important not to confuse his carefully qualified doctrines with the cruder positions advanced by some of his self-proclaimed successors. This applies, par excellence, to the work of the most renowned and thorough of these, Jacques-Bénigne Bossuet. Written 1,250 years after Augustine’s death, Bossuet’s *Discours sur l’histoire universelle* (1681; *Discourse on Universal History*) is imbued throughout with a naïve confidence that the entire course of history owes its pervasive character to the contrivance of a “higher wisdom.” In the eyes of Bossuet, to grasp and understand the great procession of empires and religions was “to comprehend in one’s mind all that is great in human affairs and have the key to the history of the universe.” For the rise and fall of states and creeds depended in the end upon the secret orders of Providence, the latter being the

source of that manifest historical justice and retribution to which, on nearly every page, the annals of the past bore clear and unmistakable witness. Bossuet's vast survey was, in fact, the last major contribution to its genre. Although it made a considerable impression when it was first published, it appeared just before the discoveries of Sir Isaac Newton effected a massive transformation of the European outlook, and the book's impact was short-lived. Thus, the development of historical speculation in the 18th century was generally marked by a tendency to reject theological and providential interpretations in favour of an approach more closely aligned, in method and aim, to that adopted by natural scientists in their investigations of the physical world.

### Historical Teleological Philosophy

Theodicy claimed that history had a progressive direction leading to an eschatological end, given by a superior power. However, this transcendent teleological sense can be thought as immanent to human history itself. Hegel probably represents the epitome of teleological philosophy of history. Hegel's teleology was taken up by Francis Fukuyama in his *The End of History and the Last Man*. Thinkers such as Nietzsche, Michel Foucault, Althusser, or Deleuze deny any teleological sense to history, claiming that it is best characterized by discontinuities, ruptures, and various time-scales, which the Annales School had demonstrated.

### Predetermined History and Philosophy:

There is disagreement about the extent to which history is ultimately deterministic. Some argue that geography, economic systems, or culture prescribes "the iron laws of history" that decide what is to happen. Others see history as a long line of acts and accidents, big and small, each playing out its consequences until that process gets interrupted by the next. It should be noted that even determinists do not rule that, from time to time, certain cataclysmic events occur to change course of history. Their main point is, however, that such events are rare and that even apparently large shocks like wars and revolutions often have no more than temporary effects on the evolution of the society.

### History As Philosophy Of Propaganda:

In his "Society must be Defended", Michel Foucault posited that the victors of a social struggle use their political dominance to suppress a defeated adversary's version of historical events in favor of their own propaganda, which may go so far as historical revisionism. Nations adopting such an approach would likely fashion a "universal" theory of history, a manifest destiny in the USA, to support their aims, with a teleological and deterministic philosophy of history used to justify the inevitableness and rightness of their victories.

### Conceptual history

The post-war German historian Reinhart Koselleck made important contributions to the philosophy of history that are largely independent from the other sources of Continental philosophy of history mentioned here. (Koselleck's contributions are ably discussed in Olsen 2012.) Koselleck contributed to a "conceptual and critical theory of history" (2002, 2004). His major compendium, with Brunner and Conze, of the history of concepts of history in the German-speaking world is one of the major expressions of this work (Brunner, Conze, and Koselleck 1972-97). Koselleck believes there are three key tasks for the metahistorian or philosopher: to identify the concepts that are either possible or necessary in characterizing history; to locate those concepts within the context of the social and political discourses and conflicts of the time period; and to critically evaluate various of these concepts



for their usefulness in historical analysis.

### Philosophy Of Sustainable history:

In this respect, the sustainable history philosophy challenges existing concepts of civilisations, such as Samuel Huntington's 'clash of civilisations'. Instead, it argues that human civilisation should not be thought of as consisting of numerous separate and competing civilisations, but rather it should be thought of collectively as only one human civilisation. Within this civilisation are many geo-cultural domains that comprise sub-cultures. Nayef Al-Rodhan envisions human civilisation as an ocean into which the different geo-cultural domains flow like rivers, "The Ocean Model of one Human Civilization". At points where geo-cultural domains first enter the ocean of human civilisation, there is likely to be a concentration or dominance of that culture. However, over time, all the rivers of geo-cultural domains become one. There is fluidity at the ocean's centre and cultures have the opportunity to borrow between them. Under such historical conditions the most advanced forms of human enterprise can thrive and lead us to a 'civilisational triumph'. Nevertheless, there are cases where geographical proximity of various cultures can also lead to friction and conflict.

### CONCLUSION:

The concept of history plays a fundamental role in human thought. It invokes notions of human agency, change, the role of material circumstances in human affairs, and the putative meaning of historical events. It raises the possibility of "learning from history." And it suggests the possibility of better understanding ourselves in the present, by understanding the forces, choices, and circumstances that brought us to our current situation. It is therefore unsurprising that philosophers have sometimes turned their attention to efforts to examine history itself and the nature of historical knowledge. These reflections can be grouped together into a body of work called "philosophy of history." This work is heterogeneous, comprising analyses and arguments of idealists, positivists, logicians, theologians, and others, and moving back and forth over the divides between European and Anglo-American philosophy, and between hermeneutics and positivism.

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