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Ibn Khaldūn and Karl Marx Philosophy of History in face of Gaza in Palestine¹

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*This is evidenced by the present ,
for the past resembles the future as one drop of water resembles another.
(Ibn Khaldūn)
...the old is dying and the new cannot be born;
in this interregnum a great variety of morbid symptoms appear.
(Antonio Gramsci)*

Abstract

Ibn Khaldūn and Karl Marx developed a philosophy of history in times and places that fall far apart. While Khaldūn understood the core of historical movements in values of social cohesion and solidarity (asabiyya), Marx based historical materialism on the development of productive forces throughout human history. Social cohesion as a driving force of history versus the history of class struggles which led to a circular conception of history on the one hand and a linear one on the other. In the face of genocide carried out with artificial intelligence in Gaza in Palestine, and the projection of dystopian urban designs of a Sunrise City in Gaza, philosophy of history is challenged to reflect on the course of history and to think about possible alternatives .

Keywords: Ibn Khaldūn, Asabiyya, Karl Marx, Philosophy of history, Gaza in Palestine, Imperiocene.

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1. Introductory Thoughts

On November 14, 2023, a group of intellectuals around the well-known German philosopher Hans Jürgen Habermas published a statement. The thinkers from the research center “Normative Orders” at Goethe University conferred moral legitimacy to the genocide in Gaza, Palestine, which was already taking shape. In line with the so-called *Staatsraison* —an extralegal German act of self-affirmation beyond the constitution and the *Grundgesetz* (basic, fundamental law)—the statement by the circle of philosophers is entitled: *Principles of Solidarity. A Statement* [...] they form the basis of a rightly understood solidarity with Israel and Jews in Germany .

The identification of Israel with Jews in Germany follows a long tradition of thought marked by identitarian exclusion and projection, extending from the rise of programmatic Zionism at the turn of the twentieth century, through the Nazi era, and into the founding period of the Federal Republic of Germany, before continuing to the present day. Jews are not perceived as a spiritual community of faith, but are reinterpreted and branded as a people, a race, or an ethnicity. And—so the ethnonationalist conclusion goes—like all peoples, races, or ethnicities, they require a state on a specific territory. Not in Europe, however, but in Palestine, which Theodor Herzl, in *The Jewish State*, idealized as “a land without a people for a people without a land” (Herzl, 1896). A settler colonial myth was born. Zionism is *Staatsraison* in Germany—and has been so for around one hundred and twenty-five years.

With unsurpassed cynicism, the officially mandated and publicly displayed selective remembrance of the crimes against humanity, committed by Nazi fascism, goes hand in hand with fantasies of annihilation and, at best, the apologetics of genocide in Palestine. The poet and thinker of decoloniality, Aimé Césaire, questioned selective memory: “Yes, it would be worthwhile to undergo a detailed clinical study of Hitler's behaviour and Hitlerism and to inform the oh-so-distinguished, oh-so-humane, oh-so-Christian citizen of the twentieth century that Hitler “lives” within him, that Hitler is his “demon”, that when he re-bukes him, he betrays a lack of logic, and that basically what he does not forgive Hitler for is not the “crime” itself, the crime against humanity, that it is not “the humiliation of humanity itself”, but that it is the crime against white people, that it is the humiliation of white people and the application of colonialist practices to Europe, to which until now only the Arabs of Algeria, the coolies of India and the Negroes of Africa had been subjected” (Césaire, 2021, p 15–16).

Indeed, the genocide is only made possible through dememorization and the continuous de-livery of weapons to the Zionist warrior state. It appears the “bulwark of civilization” (Herzl, 1896) is to be perpetuated in Palestine at any cost. After the United States of America, Germany is the second-largest supplier of the arsenal of murderous killing instruments to Israel, to which hundred thousand—if not more—Palestinians have fallen victim to date.

Two years after the Frankfurt statement, we learn of eight donkeys that were airlifted from Gaza to Germany with the help of the Israeli military and a corresponding nongovernmental organization, allegedly to give the animals a new home away from the destroyed Gaza, which in terms of area roughly corresponds to Germany’s smallest federal state, Bremen.

In total, Israel has abducted six hundred donkeys from Gaza. This inhumane act complements the genocide, accompanied by starvation through the blockade of humanitarian aid deliveries. Donkeys are among the few remaining means of transport in Gaza, including for the wound-ed. In Gaza, it is not only fuel that is in short supply.

At the same time, the German government refuses to admit severely injured children for medical treatment, even though various cities and municipalities have declared their willingness to take them in. But what is to be expected from racist fantasies of annihilation that describe Palestinians as “human animals”? It looks like as if all life in Gaza should be forced to disappear, to erect dystopian urban landscapes upon the plowed-under ruins, in which zombies and artificial intelligence triumph. The burying of material traces of remembrance of former civilizations beneath the earth recalls the violent fantasies of the Roman Cato, who demanded the complete destruction of the once-flourishing trading city of Carthage (Quintern, 2024) .

The Gaza project, developed under the representative leadership of Jared Kushner, Donald Trump's son-in-law, bears the title ‘Sunrise’. Not because the dystopia of a lifeless skyscraper landscape has the potential to be realized, it confronts the philosophy of history with the question of whether the memory of a humane, predominantly peaceful past, for which Gaza in Palestine has stood for millennia, but whether a model of the future is emerging that has the destruction of life as its prerequisite.

Once people have been degraded to animals in a racist manner, it seems easy to anthropomorphize animals instead. Unfortunately, we cannot ask the donkeys from Gaza for their opinion. No one asked them whether they wanted to go to Germany. And no one asked them when donkeys in a Zionist unit (the Zion Mule Corps) under the notorious Zionist ideologue Ja-botinsky

were forced to serve in the Battle of Gallipoli in 1915. That well-known battle, costly of lives for all sides and supposedly the first—though not the last—European world war, was followed two years later by the conquest of Gaza and Palestine by British troops in 1917. Not to mention the victims on the Palestinian side, even back then the Great Umar al-Khattab Mosque in Gaza was severely damaged by British air attacks. How many times has the mosque already been rebuilt?

Against this backdrop, the German proverb applies: Don't be a donkey! The animal-loving nature of the Zionist occupiers has only recently been reaffirmed. In a conversation with a major German newspaper, an Israeli occupation soldier stated, while handing out sausages to dogs in the Gaza Strip, that he welcomes dogs in Israel—while declaring that he intends to show no mercy toward the people in Gaza. As if it were not already more than one could bear to witness, over a long period of time and broadcast live through the media, the artificially intelligence-controlled slaughter of (wo-) men, elderly, and children in Gaza on a scale and with a density never experienced in human history. Dog lovers and despisers of humanity can even come to celebrate the genocide.

Is it even possible in times of the Palestinian genocide to reflect, from a philosophical perspective, on history and its possible future course? Alexander Kluge, a German author and filmmaker, compared in his visual atlas *Sand and Time* (Kluge, 2025) the concrete pulverized by the not-ending bombardment in Gaza with the sand of Carthage, destroyed by the Romans more than 2150 years ago near present-day Tunis. While the contaminated concrete in Gaza is lifeless and no longer usable in any way, the sand of the desert retains its mineralogical micro-structure, which, I believe, bears witness to a simple form of life. Kluge writes: "Concrete ground down by drones and bombs / Dead and denser than any sand in nature" (Kluge, 2025, p 21).

Beyond confronting the bombardment-caused dissolution of building substances—here, concrete—with the living sand of the desert, Kluge synchronizes historical events far removed from one another in time and space, condensing them in his images: the destruction of Carthage by the Roman Empire following the outbreak of the so-called Punic Wars in 274 BCE, the victorious Battle of Hattin in Palestine under Salah ad-Din in 1087 and the failed crusade, the attempted conquest by the French king Louis IX of Carthage/Tunis in 1270. This synchronous historicization, according to Kluge, creates a freer narrative space (Kluge, 2025, p161).

Narrative spaces in Germany become increasingly narrow. The current inquisition is trying to silence critical voices, delegitimizing the settler colonial apartheid ideology of Zionism. It intervenes in all areas of scientific, cultural and political criticism, most recently in the field of art. In the German city of Magdeburg, Italian artist Costantino Ciervo had referred to continuities – a painting depicting Anne Frank, a Jewish girl murdered by the Nazis, wearing a kufiyah. Now the Inquisition is demanding the painting to be removed, if not the entire exhibition to be closed.

From the perspective of the philosophy of history, the question arises whether, with reference to the long waves of imperialist destruction driven by conquest on the other side of the Mediterranean, or the White Sea (bahr al-abyad), conclusions can be drawn for the future. At this point, an attempt is made to do so by comparing two scholars of historical philosophy. These two schools (mathab) are far apart in both time and space. They developed different understandings when it comes to possible courses of history. The scholars in question are Ibn Khaldūn, who worked for a time in late 13th-century mainly in Tunisia, and Karl Marx from Trier in Germany, who worked first in Paris and later primarily in London 450 years after the former passed away in Cairo in 1406.

At first, I will outline historiography shortly during the Abbasid period, before discussing Ibn Khaldūn's philosophy of history, introducing a new theory in the rich tradition of Arabic and Persian historiography. Karl Marx, without referring to Ibn Khaldūn —it yet cannot be verified that Marx had access to early French and English translations of parts of the oeuvre *Muqqadima*—later built up on the historic-empiric fundament. Future research in the history of ideas and philosophy will have to compare the early writings of Karl Marx, especially the "Paris Manuscripts" with the *Muqqadima*. Ibn Khaldūn inaugurated social and cultural sciences, an anthropology based on historical and sociological foundations (Weidner, 2012, p 17), thus especially as he deduced historical processes, structures and phenomena from socio-economic modes of living. This is the common ground Ibn Khaldūn and Marx share. When it comes to philosophy of history they differ decisively .

Following an outline of the development of historiography under the Abbasids, the two schools of historiography – Ibn Khaldūn founded one, as did Karl Marx later – are compared to conclude with a presentation of possible alternatives. Does the philosophy of history offer possible answers to genocide and resistance in Palestine?

2. From early Islamic historiography to the Abbasid era (8th - 13th Centuries)

From the flourishing periods of Arabic-Islamic sciences (8th–16th centuries), many historiographical works have survived. These range from universal histories to regional, local, and cultural histories; from historiographies of specific disciplines, including the history of medicine or the history of philosophy, religion, and ideas, to travel historiography and historical novellas. The treasures of historical scholarship from this period—preserved in manuscript collections scattered across the world—have, although certainly not yet fully explored, been continuously catalogued, increasingly edited, and in some cases translated into European languages and Turkish over the past two centuries. The Abbasid era (750–1258) is undoubtedly among the best-documented periods in human history.

Among the extensive works—often chronologically structured in the style of annals—on the world as it was known at the time, such as those by al-Ṭabarī (839–923), which were continued after his death, the historical-geographical writings of al-Masʿūdī (895–957), the histories of religion, ideas, and philosophy by al-Shahrastānī (d. 1153) or the city history of Aleppo by Ibn al-ʿAdīm (1192–1262)—mentioned here merely as representative examples from the vast corpus of historical literature of this epoch—the work of Ibn Khaldūn (1332–1406), born in Tunis, stands apart primarily due to its philosophical derivation and social-scientific embedding of history. Before turning to this, however, the methodology of traditional Arabic-Islamic historiography shall be briefly outlined.

Not least motivated by the need for reliable documentation of the life and deeds of the Prophet Muhammad, Arabic historiography in Islam began to flourish early—already in the first decades after the Prophet’s death in 632. It should be emphasized that this involved the written fixation of biographical material, namely the life of the Prophet, although this emphasis should not be taken to diminish the value attributed to the accuracy of oral transmission. It is likely that oral and written traditions mutually reinforced one another. The shortage lay more in writing materials than in the desire for literacy, as illustrated by the account of a man who continued writing on his sandals once his writing surface had been exhausted (Sezgin, 1967, p 63). Fuat Sezgin demonstrated as early as 1956, in *Buḥārī’nin Kaynakları* (Sezgin 1956), the historiographical methodology of chains of transmission (*isnād*) and their early written fixation. In his universal history, al-Ṭabarī reproduces letters written by Ibn al-Zubayr (635–712) concerning the life of the Prophet.

While, with regard to chronologically structured annals and dynastic chronicles, influences from Greek, Syriac, and Middle Persian sources seem plausible—Ibn Khaldūn mentions a Greek work by Orosius (*Adversus Paganos*) as a source that, together with Dioscorides' *Materia Medica*, reached al-Andalus in 948 as a gift from the Byzantine emperor Romanos to the court of 'Abd al-Raḥmān—the isnād tradition appears to derive from a genuinely Arabic tradition (Rosenthal, 1952, p 72). This may go back to pre-Islamic Arab customs and relate to the faithful transmission of reports (*akhbār*, sing. *khavar*), genealogies, poetry, and songs. Al-Ṭabarī follows the isnād methodology in his universal history (Sezgin, 1967, p 323) to ensure the most reliable, source-based transmission of events possible. It is noteworthy in this context that divergent accounts from different provenances are sometimes presented side by side, thereby encouraging readers to weigh and compare the truth value of the reports.

Arabic historiography, which primarily follows a chronological-biographical approach (annals)—occasionally incorporating ethical aspects of governance (mirrors for princes) into court chronicles—has no comparable precursor to the philosophical-theoretical derivation of history as developed by Ibn Khaldūn (Rosenthal, 1952, p104). Only works such as *Bad' wa-l-Tārīkh* by Ibn Ṭāhir al-Maqdisī and *Risāla fī mulk al-ʿArab* by al-Kindī (800–873) follow a philosophy of history and suggest possible connections to Aristotelian or pseudo-Aristotelian concepts of the state. The Arabic term *dawla* (state), in its original meaning, denotes “rotation” or “turn” (Rosenthal, 1952, p78).

Ibn Khaldūn claims to have founded history as a science and to have freed it from its previous subordination to rhetoric or literature, understood as edifying narratives of victorious battles and heroic traditions. He does so both through a critical engagement with Aristotle's *Politics*, which, circulated among the people, and in opposition to the traditionalists, including al-Ṭabarī and travel historians such as al-Mas'ūdī, whom he accuses—already in the introduction to his major work, the *Muqaddima*—of exaggeration and reliance on rumors (for example, when he attributes the fall of the Barmakid dynasty under Hārūn al-Rashīd not to a love affair but to persistent corruption and the withholding of tax revenues).

Ibn Khaldūn places particular emphasis on contextualizing historical phenomena within temporal and spatial (geographical) dimensions, as well as within socio-cultural conditions. He follows a source-critical method, thereby developing historiography from mere transmission into a science.

Against this backdrop, it is necessary to free Ibn Khaldūn from confinement within European Islamic studies, Orientalism, and Arabic studies, and to make his philosophical, theoretical, and methodological approaches accessible to historiographical debates. At the same time, the invaluable contributions of translations by Annemarie Schimmel (1951), Franz Rosenthal into English (1958), and most recently Alma Giese into German (2016) can hardly be overstated—for without the painstaking work of translation and philology, the work would remain inaccessible beyond the Arabic-speaking world.

Ibn Khaldūn (1332–1406), born into a respected family of officials that had emigrated from Seville to Tunis as the so-called Reconquista advanced, came into a world marked by instability and dynastic feuds in the western (Maghreb) and far western (maghrib al-aqṣā = al-Andalus) regions. His excellent education (Qur’anic and ḥadīth studies, law, philosophy) and early experience in the chanceries of various courts repeatedly made him a sought-after advisor and administrator in Tunis (Ḥafṣids), Fez, Bougie (Marīnids), and Granada. Not infrequently, however, he became entangled in political tensions that did not spare him even a period of imprisonment—albeit a relatively short one of nearly 22 months. Friends of his, such as the scholar Ibn al-Khaṭīb of Granada, paid for doubts about their loyalty within the web of political intrigue with their lives.

Ibn Khaldūn also undertook diplomatic missions, for example to the court of Pedro the Cruel in Castile in 1364. Yet he repeatedly longed to continue his studies and to write, and he was always grateful for opportunities to withdraw from political turbulences—sometimes to places outside urban turbulence, to Sufi communities, or under the protection of Arab tribes. With the Awlād ‘Ārif, who granted him refuge for four years in the seclusion of the province of Oran, he began composing the Muqaddima, the theoretical-historical introduction to his historical work. In the early stages of the work, his autobiography (‘Ibar) was interwoven—an autobiographical approach to history that was later edited as an independent book.

It was probably under the pretext of undertaking a pilgrimage that Ibn Khaldūn managed to evade further political quarrels when he set out for Cairo. There, in Mamluk Egypt—the flourishing metropolis on the Nile, benefiting from its long-distance trade connections, including with India—he spent the rest of his life, holding high offices, including that of chief judge, even if conflicts within the legal school or between it and the sultan or his court repeatedly pushed Ibn Khaldūn out of prestigious positions.

The culmination and at the same time the conclusion of his diplomatic career was his mission to Timur in 1400, when Timur's troops were besieging Damascus. Ibn Khaldūn's scholarship and diplomatic skill contributed significantly to Timur—who was deeply interested in history—not advancing further toward Egypt and lifting the siege of Damascus. Extensive sections of Ibn Khaldūn's autobiography are devoted to these encounters with Timur. Ibn Khaldūn died in Cairo in 1406.

3. 'Asabiyyah

Ibn Khaldūn clearly distinguished between religion and science. To support this, he quotes the Prophet Muhammad as emphasizing that even he deferred to scholars and physicians in matters of worldly judgment (Rosenthal, 1958, p150). Regarding statehood as well, Ibn Khaldūn argues that the rational human being requires no religion, citing states in the southern and northern regions of the so-called temperate zone. Rational thinking, he maintains, does not require prophets (Giese, 2016, p 115).

Although the *Muqaddima* reflects influences of essentialist thought and biblical mythology with respect to the geographical-climatic determination of character traits—including notions of African vivacity, carefreeness, and emotionality—Ibn Khaldūn nevertheless rejects al-Mas'ūdī's view that these traits result from a weakness of the brain leading to intellectual deficiency. He finds this explanation neither convincing nor demonstrable (Giese, 2016, p 124). In a critical, decolonial history of Khaldun's reception in Europe, it would certainly be challenging to trace possible influences on the idea of Africa as a 'land of children,' as we later find in Herder. Racist anthropology, which in 19th-century Europe led to racist skull measurements (anthropometry), nevertheless has no Arab antecedents.

The Arab reception and further development of Aristotelian elements in philosophy distances itself from hierarchical, vertical and deterministic constructs, as found in Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* or *Politics*. Ibn Khaldūn criticized before gone historiography, focusing primarily on the eastern Arab-Islamic world, as insufficient especially regarding the West (Maghreb). Aristotle's philosophical-theoretical treatise *Politics* was, in his view, inadequately supported by evidence, although he likely drew on Aristotle's concept of the *zoon politikon*—the human being as a rational creature in need of community—or its Arabic commentaries and receptions, without using the term "animal". Comparisons to the states of bees and ants, as well as parts of economics, also correspond with Aristotle. Yet Ibn

Khaldūn's philosophy and theory of history cannot be traced back to any preceding model.

Ibn Khaldūn's starting point lies initially in natural—that is, geographical and climatic—conditions, where it seems that in terms of determinism, he follows Galen's (129–199 AC) humoral pathology. Particularly distinctive is his derivation of human characteristics from the geography of the Arab and Maghrebi regions.

The distinctions and fine differentiations he draws testify to a precise knowledge of nomadic, semi-nomadic, agrarian, and urban ways of life in the Maghreb. His interdisciplinary perspective in the modern sense—integrating sociological, economic, cultural, religious, and ethnological aspects into a comprehensive picture—certainly holds potential for cultural-historical research.

The rise and fall of rule / power (*mulk*), informed by Ibn Khaldūn's autobiographical experiences—especially during the four years in which he composed the *Muqaddima*—makes the concept of 'asabiyyah the central point of departure of his historic concept. Using this term, Ibn Khaldūn recapitulates the formation of the early Islamic community as a historical example, frequently drawing on the Qur'an and the Book of Moses. The term can best be understood in a socio-psychological way as a not pure genealogically grounded, strong sense of cohesion (group solidarity). It dates to pre-Islamic times and thus continues an ancient Arab tradition within Islam.

Islam is interpreted by Ibn Khaldūn as a value system that prevents rivalry, tension, and conflict and that, within mainly nomadic ways of life, creates and stabilizes unity among tribes and groups ("protected dependents"). The Islamic conquests, remarkable for their rapid pace and vast spatial extent, were inspired and sustained by this "group solidarity." Driven by cohesion based on virtues such as bravery, endurance, and willingness to sacrifice—virtues that Ibn Khaldūn locates primarily among Bedouin communities, the Arabs living in the vast deserts of the Arabian Peninsula. Following Ibn Khaldūn, some of these attributes, including toughness, are also found in the camel. The Bedouins' pastoral, camel-based way of life contrasts with sedentary lifestyles centered in more fertile plains and valleys and based on agriculture. Finally, there is the city, which is also the location of rule / power (*mulk*), characterized by luxury, including high meat consumption, the sciences, and other amenities. Here, people are also less religious, as Ibn Khaldūn emphasizes.

Historically, the city emerges from nomadic life. Sedentariness or settlement is the ultimate goal of culture and at the same time the starting point of its decay. Sedentariness—and even more so the city—is the endpoint of evil and the point farthest removed from good, as Ibn Khaldūn underscores. Decline now begins. Initial vigor during the establishment of rule is followed, with growing comforts and luxury, by a loss of ‘asabiyyah, that is, of virtues—a process of decline accompanied by rising tax demands and resulting impoverishment, particularly of the rural population. This process unfolds over four generations before, after the final collapse of the dynasty, the cycle begins anew.

The city–countryside opposition, within the historical-cultural milieu of the late fourteenth-century Maghreb, thus emerges as the essential driving force of a circular course of history. While geographical-economic and cultural conditions play an important role, they are not decisive, determined. Decisive, according to Ibn Khaldūn, are the Bedouin values subsumed under the concept of ‘asabiyyah (group solidarity). Rise and decline of ‘asabiyyah determines the ascent and fall of states and civilizations.

4. Reception and discussion

Studies have addressed comparative intellectual-historical questions, including comparisons of the Muqaddima with Machiavelli’s *The Prince* (*Il Principe*) or Giambattista Vico’s *New Science* (*Principii d’una Scienza Nuova*, 1668–1744) (Önder, Uluşan 2018). This is not the place to pursue connections, borrowings, and parallels of a philosophy-of-history, nor to trace possible overlaps and entanglements of Aristotelian, Augustinian, or Khaldūnian lines of thought. There is no doubt that Ibn Khaldūn’s scientific and interdisciplinary approach to historical thought has had lasting effects and adaptations. Unlike in many other scientific disciplines—such as optics or medicine and philosophy—where translation movements from Arabic into Latin can be traced at least back to the twelfth and earlier centuries, we have no evidence so far of translations of the Muqaddima in the 15th century.

Assigning philosophies of history to certain geographical regions—especially the circular model of the Muqaddima—leads to nowhere, falling into geographical determinism, cultural essentialism and Eurocentric orientalism, e.g. in Spengler’s *Untergang des Abendlandes* (*Decline of the Occident*)(1923).

5. Karl Marx; Determinants of historical futures

A predetermined future—often unreflect—has shaped historical thought beyond religious worldviews, as will be briefly illustrated here using the

example of a teleological school that represents the most radical variant of the European Enlightenment: Marxism. This is a conception of history that, at best, subordinates morals and values to a decipherable historical development. Karl Marx went through several productive phases. In his early writings, values (morals, ethics) still played an important role. With his study of English political economy in the 1850s, a model began to take shape in his thinking that codified the course of history in a lawful progression. Later, towards the end of the 1870s, Marx began to question determinism in the course of history, with his study of Russian history and anthropology serving as an important point of reference.

Like natural laws, determinants form behind the backs of human beings that inevitably lead history into the epoch of capitalism, before the continuum of modern class struggle transitions into socialism. Compared to Ibn Khaldūn, this is a demoralized view of history, which moves in a cycle only at a higher level—from primitive communism to modern communism. The progress of the productive forces (mainly techniques / technologies) produces linearity in historical development. Scientific socialism explicitly rejects both utopian historical designs, to which it denies any future, and existing “pre-capitalist” modes of production, above all the “Oriental” village community:

“England, it is true, in causing a social revolution in Hindostan, was actuated only by the vilest interests, and was stupid in her manner of enforcing them. But that is not the question. The question is, can mankind fulfil its destiny without a fundamental revolution in the social state of Asia? If not, whatever may have been the crimes of England she was the unconscious tool of history in bringing about that revolution.” (Marx, 1853)

Marx claimed to have deciphered these unconscious tools in the natural laws of commodity production. People, whether capitalists or workers, peasants or feudal lords, slaves or slave owners, are trapped in supposed natural laws determining the historic process. Human-Beings were thus not understood as subjects and shapers of history and its course. History, and with it the history of class struggles, unfolds behind people’s backs, unconsciously. Moral, ethics and values in general have no impact on the course of history. In his critique of religion, Marx follows Hegel, for whom religion in India appears as “opium for the people.” Whereas for Ibn Khaldūn the value dimension embedded in Islam—‘asabiyyah—contains within itself the driving force of future historical development, for Marx it is a quasi-natural law operating behind the backs of the producers that unfold teleologically in stages—from primitive society and slave society through feudalism and capitalism

ultimately to socialism. This development can neither be halted nor wished into being. Even in its periodization, Marx's conception of history proves to be a radical variant of the European Enlightenment, as capitalism and modernity are often used synonymously.

In *The German Ideology* (1845), Marx's materialist conception of history took shape: "Morality, religion, metaphysics, and all other ideology and their corresponding forms of consciousness thus no longer retain the semblance of independence. They have no history, they have no development, but men, developing their material production and their material inter-course, alter, along with this, their real existence, their thinking, and the products of their thinking. It is not consciousness that determines life, but life that determines consciousness." (Marx, 1845)

As a result of his intensive engagement with English political economy (Smith, Ricardo, Mill, Malthus), from the 1850s onward economics became for Marx the determinant of the future. From economic crisis—above all the tendency of the rate of profit to fall—socialism necessarily emerges, eventually giving way to communism, the realm of freedom, which would enable human beings to be farmers one day, carpenters the next, and poets on the third. This assumed future of historical development presupposed capitalism as a preceding stage. Societies that had not yet reached this stage therefore had to pass through capitalism first. The corresponding tool—the historical driving force—was European capitalism, which, in Asia, Africa, and America, paved the way for an alleged progress in the form of colonialism, according to supposedly natural laws.

In correspondence with Eduard Bernstein, Friedrich Engels, in the context of his critique of the 1882 Ahmad 'Urabi uprising in Egypt, probably refers to Ibn Khaldūn. The French translations of the *Muqaddima* by Quatremère (1782–1852) were accessible to Marx and Engels, although further research is needed to prove when and in what context the classics of Marxism may have studied Ibn Khaldūn in French or English translation.

In his letter to Bernstein, as well as in his late-life study of early Christianity (1894), Engels contrasts a circular course of history in the Orient with a progressive European one. We will give Friedrich Engels extensive space at this point. He must have read or known Ibn Khaldūn: "A peculiar antithesis to this was the religious risings in the Mohammedan world, particularly in Africa. Islam is a religion adapted to Orientals, especially Arabs, i.e., on one hand to townsmen engaged in trade and industry, on the other to nomadic Bedouins. Therein lies, however, the embryo of a periodically recurring

collision. The townspeople grow rich, luxurious and lax in the observation of the “law.” The Bedouins, poor and hence of strict morals, contemplate with envy and covetousness these riches and pleasures. Then they unite under a prophet, a Mahdi, to chastise the apostates and restore the observation of the ritual and the true faith and to appropriate in recompense the treasures of the renegades. In a hundred years they are naturally in the same position as the renegades were: a new purge of the faith is required, a new Mahdi arises and the game starts again from the beginning. That is what happened from the conquest campaigns of the African Almoravids and Almohads in Spain to the last Mahdi of Khartoum who so successfully thwarted the English. It happened in the same way or similarly with the risings in Persia and other Mohammedan countries. All these movements are clothed in religion but they have their source in economic causes; and yet, even when they are victorious, they allow the old economic conditions to persist untouched. So, the old situation remains unchanged and the collision recurs periodically. In the popular risings of the Christian West, on the contrary, the religious disguise is only a flag and a mask for attacks on an economic order which is becoming antiquated. This is finally overthrown, a new one arises and the world progresses” (Engels, 1894).

Marx and Engels embody the most radical variant of the European Enlightenment, which—as Edward Said demonstrated, primarily studying English and French literature and philosophy, in *Orientalism* (1979)—requires the Orient as a counter-image for Western self-understanding. This applies no less to historical thought and calls for critical reassessment in the spirit of a needed decolonization of the humanities.

From the mid-1990s onwards, Karam Khella wrote a profound critique of Marxist thought in three volumes. Some of the volumes were published in French translation (Khella 2004; 2007). When we look at the genuine commitment of Marxist-oriented people in the world today—not least in the context of the global solidarity movement with Palestine—it seems as if the historical Marx and Marx as a symbol of justice are two very different things. Marx certainly promoted the idea of justice, especially within Europe. His contributions to the philosophy of history also testify to his optimism that a different, more just world is possible. Therefore, the criticism of Marx presented here is, of course, not absolute. Today, it seems necessary to rediscover and reclaim traditions of resistance in Asia, Africa, the Americas and also Europe that were overshadowed by Marxism (Quintern, 2024).

6. Philosophy of history at the end of the Imperiocene

How can history be interpreted in view of the enormous extent of deliberate destruction of people and life in Gaza and in Palestine in general? Can we use the theoretical and methodical approaches of Ibn Khaldūn and Marx to find an explanation? It seems that certain components of these respective philosophies of history could be helpful if combined. Both thinkers prioritized material foundations in specific ways of life over an understanding of driving forces in human history. It is well known that Marx assumed a history of class struggles as a continuum. From this, he derived a linearity of history, which returns to its beginnings in primitive communism at a higher level. Thus, Marx's conception of history presents itself as a linear circularity, which, through the dialectic of contradictions in specific historical epochs, goes hand in hand with progress and, in this way, like a law of nature, leads to the realm of freedom, communism.

For Ibn Khaldūn, it is social cohesive force in specific ways of life, in this case Bedouin, that drives history. It should be emphasized, however, that Ibn Khaldūn stresses that the developments he historicizes relate to the Maghreb at the end of the 14th century. Unlike Marx, Ibn Khaldūn does not necessarily derive a global system that claims validity for all regions and countries of the world. As a result of the reception of Ibn Khaldūn's work, the circular model of the rise and fall of forms of rule in the Maghreb was transferred to the long-term history of empires. If we look at the initial dynamics of imperial empires, the Roman, Byzantine, Ottoman or more recent imperial powers, most recently the imperialist United States which already in the 19th century filled the gap left by Spanish colonialism in the southern Americas. A game that the Cuban poet José Martí had already realized. In the 1950s the US attempted to present itself as an alternative to the old imperialist powers England and France. Presenting themselves in this way cannot of course not hide the fact that the USA is a settler colonialism whose statehood was accompanied by the almost complete extermination of the indigenous peoples and whose cities were built first and foremost by slaves and other forms of forced labor. All this was accompanied by the racist system of apartheid .

If we consider the long history of violence perpetuated by imperialist powers, it seems that one follows in the footsteps of the previous one (Spain, Portugal, the Netherlands, England, Germany, etc.). It seems that, as Ibn Khaldūn correctly observes, after a prolonged period of tyranny, an

imperialist power declines, while a new one emerges and strives to continue the legacy of imperial world domination .

Comparative historicization naturally requires a close look at the specific historical contexts of given times and places. Ibn Khaldūn has sometimes been mystified, and his thinking on history has been turned into a metahistorical constant, detached from the context of the Maghrebian thinker's life in the 14th century. For Oswald Spengler, who follows Ibn Khaldūn's cyclical model, it is the stages of 'growth, rise, decline, decay, stagnation and demise' that determine the cycle of states and empires in history in a racist manner, and in clear contrast to Ibn Khaldūn, the end of a culture is marked by 'fellahism', whereby he uses the Arabic term for rural population (peasants) in a racist way (Spengler 1922, p 681). Beyond racist and Eurocentric appropriations, however, Ibn Khaldūn's approaches can certainly be considered .

Unlike Ibn Khaldūn, Karl Marx identifies a global model of development. According to Marx, England, supposedly the most advanced capitalist country of his time, provides the model for this. If we follow Marx, England merely holds up a mirror to every other, less developed country, showing it its own inevitable history. Marx had obviously become entrapped in a model of thinking that equates to historical determinism. From a historical-philosophical perspective, the question arises as to the essence of progress. There is no doubt that human history is partly characterized by technological innovations. Just if we think of the storage capacity of so-called clouds compared to books as carriers of knowledge, or the speed at which knowledge and information spread across the globe in fractions of a second. It seems as if time and space are becoming increasingly condensed and humanity's reach for the stars is expanding into the universe. But is this really progress in an ethical, humanistic sense?

Let us return to Gaza in Palestine. Elsewhere, I have outlined the long-term history of Gaza (Quintern 2024). I discussed the understanding of long-term history, as it is sometimes understood as the Anthropocene or Holocene, in the context of the Imperiocene using the example of Gaza in Palestine. Imperiocene is a term that approaches long-term and universal history in the struggle between foreign imperialist rule and resistance. It is a historical-philosophical approach that was developed by Karam Khella in the 1990s in his Universalist theory of History (Khella 1994) as an alternative to historical-materialist schools. In Gaza, Palestine, the long history of imperial tyranny over peoples, humans and all life is condensed, as if in a burning

mirror. All European imperialist powers sought to ascend to world domination through conquering Palestine. Starting with Alexander the Great, through the Romans and Byzantines, the Spanish under Columbus, to the Euro-American powers in decline. Ibn Khaldūn seems to be confirmed in a certain way.

But what is the construct “progress” if we consider e.g. the world heritage site of Tel as-Sultan in Palestine (Ariha, Jericho) dating back to ca. 10.000 BC or the younger sustainable terrasse agricultures around Al-Quds (Jerusalem). It seems as if there has been a progression of destruction throughout the long imperial dominated time, aiming not only to wipe out the human carriers of flourishing cultures that develop in harmony with all life, but also to erase all material traces of a past life from reality and memory.

An aspect that Marx left out: the progressive development of destructive technologies. If we compare the siege and conquest of Gaza under Alexander the Great, which was certainly cruel, at that time soldiers and commanders still faced each other with roughly the same weapons. Now it seems as if a permanent war of annihilation is being waged against the people of Gaza, raining megatons of deadly loads down on a starving population from unreachable distances and great heights, supported by artificial intelligence. Marx’s category of productive force has steadily ‘evolved’ into a destructive force in the Imperiocene being currently tested primarily on the Palestinian population in Gaza. But from a historical-philosophical perspective, can this unprecedented destructiveness lead to success? Is the future of Gaza that of an American Zionist vision of a Sunrise City? Or will humanity find its way back to a way of life based on creative culture, unfolding in harmony between people, societies, beliefs and all living beings? Is the future of humanity hidden in its long history? It seems as if the intended destruction of life in Gaza and Palestine is striving to erase the memory of another time. Another paradox is that, as the genocide in Palestine progresses, more and more people around the world are embracing the humanistic dimension of the Palestinian suffering and resistance.

As if a long wave of social cohesion and solidarity (*asabiyya*), which is part of everyday life in Gaza under unimaginably difficult conditions, is carried forward in space and time. Thus, it is not unlikely that even if the dystopia of a Sunrise Gaza is projected on the ruins and piles of corpses in Gaza, it symbolizes the tombstone of the Imperiocene rather than becoming reality.

By then at the latest, the sand beneath sterile and imagined skyscrapers will remember its life.

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