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# MACROHISTORY AND FUTURES STUDIES

Sohail Inayatullah

**Through its delineation of the patterns of history, macrohistory gives a structure to the fanciful visions of futurists. Macrohistory gives us the weight of history, balancing the pull of the image of the future. Yet, like futures studies, it seeks to transform past, present and future, not merely reflect upon social space and time. Drawing from the book *Macrohistory and Macrohistorians* [Galtung, J. and Inayatullah, S. (eds), Praeger, New York, 1997], this article links macrohistory with futures studies. It takes the views of over 20 macrohistorians and asks what they offer to the study of alternative futures. © 1998 Elsevier Science Ltd. All rights reserved**

Macrohistory is the study of the histories of social systems, along separate trajectories, through space and time, in search of patterns, even laws of social change. Macrohistory is thus nomothetic and diachronic. Macrohistorians<sup>1</sup>—those who write macrohistory—are to the the historian what an Einstein is to the run-of-the-mill physicist: in search of the totality of space and time, social or physical. Macrohistorians use the detailed data of historians for their grand theories of individual, social and civilizational change.

They and their macrohistories have much to offer futures studies. Futures studies, while strong at breaking humans out of the present, are often weak at contouring the parameters of the future possible. Macrohistory through its delineation of the structures of history—of the causes and mechanisms of historical change; of inquiry into what changes and what stays stable; of an analysis of the units of history; and of a presentation of the stages of history—provides a structure from which to forecast and gain insight into the future.

By knowing what historically can and cannot change, scenarios of the future can

Sohail Inayatullah is a Fellow at the Communication Centre, Queensland University of Technology, PO Box 2434, Brisbane, Queensland 4001, Australia (Tel: + 61 7 3864 2192; fax: + 61 7 3864 1813; e-mail: [sinayatullah@hotmail.com](mailto:sinayatullah@hotmail.com)).

be more plausible. By exploring the range of units or collectivities, we can break out of the straitjacket of nations as our only unit for the future. Finally, by understanding the stages of history, we can better understand the stages of the future. Macrohistory gives us the weight of history, balancing the pull of the image of the future. It gives a historical distance to the many claims of paradigm shifts, allowing us to distinguish between what are mere perturbations and what are genuine historical transformations. While giving us insights into the human condition, Macrohistory also intends to explain past, present and future, and to a certain extent predict the movement of units through time.

### **Historical and epistemic context**

However, even as macrohistorians make claims of the empirical, it is important to locate macrohistorians within the historical conditions they write in and the episteme that frames what is knowable. For example, Islamic philosopher Ibn Khaldun asserts that his sociology is time, space and culture invariant, yet the bases for his theory emerged from the primacy of unity in Islamic thought. His theory of history and his comments on historiography can be located within the current thinking of the time, the 14th century. Given his knowledge of Bedouins, personal participation in various coups and assorted palace intrigues, and the centrality of unity in Islamic cosmology, it is not surprising that what emerges is a history of dynastic change with Bedouin challenges to 'civilization' leading to unity employed as the key explanatory variable.

This is true for Marx as well. Although Marx attempted to create a perfect new world realizable through an objective understanding of the real, he was responding to a tradition as well—the concerns of 19th century Europe. His thinking was contextualized by the rationality of the Enlightenment and its German response (the idealistic perspective of Kant and Hegel). Given the idealistic nature of the philosophical nexus around him and of the recent Christian past, he claimed that his work was a science of the objective of the material world, and not a speculation on the idealistic or religious world of the medieval era.

Much earlier, perhaps the first macrohistorian, Ssu-Ma Ch'ien (145–90 BC), also faced the problem of context. Chinese macrohistorian Ssu-Ma Ch'ien had to write within his episteme before he could transform it. To be intelligible, he had to write in the context of Confucian history. There were various problems to be addressed such as the periodicity of history, the causes of the rise and fall of dynasties, the role of the tao, the importance of morality in giving meaning to history, and the centrality of the golden past. However unique and revolutionary his writing was, it still existed within a particular sea of knowledge.

Futures studies as well exist within a particular frame—that of the problem of modernity and postmodernity. In response to the needs of capitalism and the interstate system, futures studies have developed predictive models of economy and national security. At the same time, a counter hegemonic discourse has developed tied to deconstructing dominant forms of knowledge and creating dissenting futures.

Along with the historical context of the macrohistorian, crucial to understanding the future are the stages of history posited. Comte had his theological (based on religion—faith), metaphysical (based on philosophy—reason) and positive (based on science—truth). Sorokin has his three ages of the ideational, dualistic-integrated and sensate but with a fourth stage as the transition, the age of scepticism and chaos.<sup>2</sup> Spencer relates

his societal types to phases in history: barbarism, militant, industrial, and a fourth yet to emerge. Vico has his Age of Gods, Heroes, Men and Barbarians (from which we return to the Age of Gods) and Ibn Khaldun argues for a primitive–civilization–primitive pattern.

### Agency, structure and the transcendental

Along with stages are issues as to the role of choice in creating history and future. Most social theorists argue back and forth between agency and structure. However, macrohistorians find escapeways out of these categories. For example, for Vico, history and future, although patterned, are not predetermined—there are laws but these are soft. As Attila Faj writes:

The famous *corsi* and *ricorsi* are both rheological and chronological, that is, circling ‘softly,’ round dancing. The softness of the law means that the successive figures of this roundelay are not necessarily unavoidable and are not independent of any condition and circumstance. Each historical stage streams into the following one and gets mixed with it, so we cannot distinguish them sharply. For a long stretch, the stages and everything that belongs to them are mingled like the sweet water of an estuary with the salt water of the sea.<sup>3</sup>

Critics, however, point out that macrohistory by focusing on the grand stages, the laws of history, removes choice and contingency, privileges structure over human agency and misses too many significant details. However, while the structure/agency dilemma is central within the linear/developmentalist model or the cyclical/fatalistic model, among others, Sarkar (*varna*—collective psychology/types of power), Galtung (cosmology), Foucault (discourse) and Sorokin (supersystems sensate, idealist/integrative and ideational) give us ways out of these dilemmas. For example, for Sarkar there is historical structure (evolutionary derived), but there is individual will and there is a cosmic will: a grander intelligence. These exist in dialectical tension.

Privileging one perspective (agency) results in individualism or liberalism (Smith, for example). Privileging another (structure) results in structuralism (Marx, for example). If one moves toward the third then divinity results (Augustine or Steiner, for example). The real has different levels—the task is to exist in them simultaneously, to develop a theory that has linear, cyclical and transcendental dimensions and has agency, structure and superagency (the transcendental) as to what causes movement through history. A theory of the future would equally need to embrace these multiple perspectives rather than mistakenly focus on any particular approach.

Choosing structure over agency would be a mistake as would be choosing agency over structure. Keeping divinity and other mysterious factors out of the macro analysis would also be a mistake. There is no necessity to make a decision to privilege a particular way of understanding; all levels of interpretation must be held on to simultaneously.

For Galtung and Foucault as well these are false choices. A particular cosmology and discourse give us the possibility of including both horns of the structure/agency dilemma (and divinity if need be). Similarly, Sorokin develops his theory arguing that any system must have its own inner dynamics and must interact with the structure of the external world that causes external and internal change, thus allowing both agency and structure. To Galtung, Foucault and Sorokin, however, superagency is not a possibility. The intervention of God or other mysterious spiritual forces is not an empirical possibility, but rather the type of approach one gets during ideational eras, or pertaining to a particular cosmology or discourse.

For most macrohistorians, individuals are important but they exist in larger fields that condition their choices: epistemological, ontological, economic and cultural or class, gender, *varna*, civilization type, dynasty, cultural personality or ways of knowing the real. Futurists, in general, tend to focus on the individual's ability in creating the future and the values that inform the good society, vision, in question. But for the macrohistorian, these value preferences in themselves exist within certain structures: biological (the evolution of the species and the environment), epistemological (the historical possibilities of what is knowable and thinkable), social (one's own culture and its history), technological (the material and social ways through which actions can be expressed), and the economic (basic needs and growth, the realities of the material world).

While some macrohistorians find ways to balance the individual and the social, others focus on the system as a whole. In the macro view, size, structure (for example, vertical/horizontal or feudal/bureaucratic arrangements), relations (person to person; person to nature; person to society) are significant and primary over individual choices and hopes. Transcendental theories, in general, focus on the individual and his (and sometimes her) relationship to the transcendental and less on the social structures in question as, for example, in the case of Teilhard De Chardin's work.

### Cyclical and linear

As important as tension between agency and structure is the debate between cyclical and linear schools of history. Cyclical theory privileges perpetual change while linear theory privileges equilibrium, although it could be an evolutionary equilibrium as in the case of Spencer. In cyclical theories change is endemic to the system: through dialectics, the principle of limits (wherein a historical stage by exaggerating its own nature and denying others is surpassed by another), through the Chinese yin/yang principle, or through the Indian Tantric *vidya/avidya* (introversion and extroversion) principle.

Ssu-Ma Ch'ien links the yin/yang principle with the rise and fall of the dynasty. Sarkar links *vidya/avidya* with his four stages of history<sup>4</sup> and with an individual's own spiritual struggle to gain *moksa* (enlightenment).

In contrast, in linear theories change is often due to external causes. Cyclical historians examine the rise and fall of civilizations. Linear historians, on the other hand, believe the fall problem applies to other civilizations (Oriental civilization, for example) while their own civilization (the West) is destined for eternal rise and progress. The formula for progress has been found; the problem now is merely staying the course. Khaldun, however, writing during the decline of Islamic civilization could see that the cause of history had to be strengthening and weakening of unity, not just the former or the latter.

While cyclical theorists have linear dimensions (the move up or they move down), it is the return to a previous stage—however modified—that does not allow for an unbridled theory of progress.

Linear theorists also have cyclical dimension to their theories. Within the narrative of linear stages, linear theorists often postulate ups and downs of lesser unit of analysis (for example, within human evolution or the evolution of capital, there might be a rise and fall of nations, firms or dynasties), but in general the larger pattern is progress. Humans might have contradictions (based on the Augustinian good/evil pattern) but society marches on either through technology, capital accumulation, innovation, the intervention or pull of God.

Spiral theorists attempt to include both, having certain dimensions which move forward and certain dimensions that repeat. Spiral theories are fundamentally about a dynamic balance.

In contrast to these approaches, Riane Eisler argues for a multilinear approach to macrohistory. She writes:

Cultural transformation...is a *multilinear* rather than *unilinear* theory of early human cultural evolution: one that proposes that it did not follow a single path, but rather a variety of paths—with groups in different environments evolving in different directions, some orienting primarily to a partnership or gylanic model and others to an androcratic model.<sup>5</sup>

Grand thinkers (macrohistorians and futurists) are rarely useful to the present—the status quo—as they represent change. By identifying endogenous causes of change, they remind that the present is bound to transform, that it cannot stay stable, nor can the idealized future society—the utopia or eutopia—for that too will transform once realized.

Cyclical theories in particular are seen as pessimistic by the elite of the core nation and the core civilization. From the view of the individual, cyclical theorists are seen as disempowering since structure and process prevail over agency. Transcendental theories are empowering in that they inspire individuals to act but they also lead to fatalism since all is in the hands of the transcendental. When combined with nationalism, transcendental theories can lead to a fascism of sorts, with the rise of one's own nation guaranteed because of historical destiny—because the *Geist* (spirit) has entered the nation or a world leader (as with Hegel and Sri Aurobindo).

Most macrohistorians have linear and cyclical dimensions in their theories. Following Khaldun, Weber, too, in some of his writings has a cyclical dimension. Once a historical structure is exhausted, 'a charismatic leader emerges outside the structure and gives it its *coup de grace*.'<sup>6</sup> As charisma becomes routinized, the new structure will also face declining legitimacy and charismatic transformation. But it is Weber's linear theory that he is most remembered for. Weber saw the development of culture as a process of constantly increasing rationalization, of growing inner consistency and coherence. This is most evident in the transition from magic to science; the development of religion from polytheism to monotheism is also viewed in this light.<sup>7</sup>

Thus, for Weber there are both cyclical and linear elements. There is progress at one level but there is a cycle of charisma–routinization–charisma as well.

But it is not only Weber who has traces of both; Adam Smith also includes cyclical elements within his linear march of economic stages. For Smith there are four stages: the era of hunting; the era of pasturage and herding; the era of agricultural; and the era of commercial and exchange economy. The force that moves society is self-love and the love of others. When these combine a society rises, when they are absent a society declines. Smith, aware of Gibbon's 'rise and fall' theoretical framework, argued that nations do not necessarily rise; there is stagnation as well.

However, as with Weber, the deeper pattern is linear—the stages are clearly progressive and there is no return to a time of less bureaucracy or back to the age of hunters. Rather within the overall framework and at another level of analysis, it is leadership for Weber, and the nation for Smith, that rises and falls. Thus, while they attempt to combine the two, it is a combination of two different levels not an overall theoretical synthesis as in the case of Sorokin.

Merely remaining in the cyclical view and not accepting any theory of progress leads one to a pessimistic view of the future and justifies, as in the case of the theories of

Pareto and Mosca, elite rule. If history is but a circulation of elites, a rotation of power from one type of elite to another type of elite, then any revolutionary movement, whether democratic or communist, is a sham. Power will centralize irrespective of who gains it. Democracy legitimizes rule of one class; the military another.

For 20th century writers, Pareto and Mosca, the cycle operates at the level of governance. Each new elite makes a claim to represent the people; however, it privileges itself or its own class. What hope does this analysis have for efforts to increase participation in governance, to increase public support? Pareto and Mosca, however, would argue that this the wrong question. For Pareto, the circulation of elites shows that for the realization of the good society elite rotation must be regular and often. For Mosca, there should be a balance of the various social forces, the different powers of society—military, peasants, landlords, priests, bureaucrats and so forth.

Cyclical views of history privilege structure over human agency. In contrast, revolutionary movements promise a break of structure, an escape from history. It is this rupture that leads to individual dedication. The practical implication of grand theories which relocates individual action to determinism is that they lead to a politics of cynicism. Thus, the usefulness of theoretical approaches which attempt to acknowledge the cyclical, the linear, and the transcendental.

### Metaphors of time

From the view of futures studies, it is the contribution of macrohistory to the study of society through time that is of great use. Within macrohistory, many metaphors of time are used. There is the million year time of the cosmos which is useful for spiritual theory but not for social macrohistory. There is individual timelessness or spiritual time, useful for mental peace but not for social development. There is also the classic degeneration of time model from heaven to hell, from the golden to the iron (From *Satya* to *Treta* to *Dvapara* to *Kali* in classical Vedic thought). There is the Chinese model wherein time is correlated with the stars, which thus has no beginning nor end. There is Occidental time which traditionally started with the birth or some other event related to the life of the Prophet. It now relates to the birth of the nation-state.

There is also archaeological time, used by Eisler, which is midway between astronomical time (billions of years) and social time (the last few thousand).

In contrast to the linear model and the four stages model which implicitly use the metaphor of the seasons, there is the biological and sexual model.

The rise and fall of nations, dynasties and families can be related to the rise and fall of the phallus. The phallic movement is dramatic and has a clear beginning and a clear end. However, men, it can be argued (using the linear model), prefer the first part of the cycle imagining a utopia where the phallus never declines. The empirical data suggest, however, that endless rise does not occur.

In contrast, not as obvious to men (and those involved in statecraft and historiography), the female experience is wavelike with multiple motions. Time slows and expands. Instead of a rise and fall model, what emerges is an expansion/contraction model. Galtung, for instance, uses the expansion/contraction metaphor to describe Western cosmology. He also suggests that there might be a relationship between different cosmologies (for example, as Christian cosmology declines, Islamic cosmology might expand).



Expansion/contraction also reminds us that there are benefits in each phase of the cycle. In the contraction, for example, the poor do not suffer as proportionally as the rich who have less speculative wealth available (although certainly the wealthy attempt to squeeze the middle class and the poor as much as possible, especially the poor in the periphery). The expansion/contraction metaphor is also used by Kondratieff and Wallerstein, but for them key variables in the model are prices and the flow of goods, not individuals or social organisms.

Biological time can also be used to understand the future. Ibn Khaldun uses the idea of generational time, of unity and creativity declining over four generations. For Sarkar each collective psychology has its own dominant temporal frame. The *shudra* (worker) lives in the present; the *ksattriya* (warrior) thinks of time as space to conquer; the *vipra* (intellectual/priest) theorizes time and imagines transcendental time; while the *vaeshya* (merchant) commodifies time.

But the central metaphor used by all cyclical theorists is the lifecycle. Spengler, in particular, uses this perspective arguing that each individual culture has a unique personality with various distinguishing characteristics. But the cycle has a downward spiral. First, there is the stage of culture. This stage eventually degenerates into mass civilization wherein the force of the money spirit leads to imperialism and the eventual death of the culture. For Toynbee, too, civilizations have particular cycles they must go through. Some elites respond to challenges through their creative faculties and others do not meet these challenges. The former expand mentally while the latter intellectually decline. Civilizations that meet challenges expand in size and wealth. Those that do not meet internal or external challenges slowly decline (unless there is rejuvenation from within, as Ibn Khaldun argues).

Within the unit of episteme there can be different types of time. The modern episteme, for example, is particularly strong on quantitative, scientific, linear time but weak on mythological, spiritual and seasonal time. Sorokin's stages also exhibit different models of time. The ideational era, for example, is strong on transcendental time while the sensate is strong on quantitative time.

The best or most complete macrohistory or history of the future must be able to negotiate the many types of time: seasonal, rise and fall, dramatic, mythological, expansion/contraction, cosmic, linear, social-cyclical as well as the intervention of the timeless in the world of time. These must be associated with notions of social structure, individual and transcendental agency.

In general, the ancient cycle alone leads to fatalism and the linear pattern alone leads to imperialism wherein particular collectivities can be placed along the ladder of economic success. Transcendental time alone leads to a focus on the cosmos and neglect of economic progress and social development. For empowering macrohistory, all three are needed. As in models of the future, utopias or plausible futures, few macrohistorians manage to include all these characteristics; rather, macrohistorians privilege certain types of time and avoid or marginalize others. Developing a theory of history or a theory of the future that coherently integrates the many types of time alluded to above is not an easy task and certainly the challenge of the future.

### **The future from macrohistory**

We now present the contributions of selected macrohistorians to the study of the future. To do this, we take selected macrohistorians and summarize the key variables they use

to think about the future. We will attempt to recontextualize their thought in light of the categories of the modern world (nation-state system, world capitalist system, structures of core and periphery, information and technological revolutions).

This task can be initially be divided into linear and cyclical categories. From Ibn Khaldun we can use three ideas: *asabiya* (unity gained through collective struggle), the rise and fall of dynasties, and the theory of four generations (from creativity to imitation to blind following to indolence). Our questions then become: who are the new bedouins? Which collectivities are building unity are ready to sacrifice the present for the future? Which ones have struggled a great deal and still retain the warrior spirit? How long will they stay in power? One answer to this question is that the new bedouins are Japan and the tigers. Confucian culture provides the unity and hierarchical structure, and defeat in war provides the struggle. How they deal with the current financial crisis will tell us a great deal about the next century.

But moving away from the nation-state analysis, it is the social movements who could be the new leaders: the environmental movements, the women's movements and the various spiritual movements. Their unity may develop from struggle against the status quo.

From Sorokin we can use the principle of limits and the pendulum theory of history. What is the next stage in human history? Have we reached the limits of sensate civilization? And if we have, what are the outlines of the emerging ideational or mixed idealistic civilization?

Sorokin also gives us a pattern for the future from which we can understand the formation of the next integrative phase. He places this pattern not at the level of the supersystem but at the level of civilization. Since Western civilization so strongly corresponds with sensate civilization, that is, since the West has assumed the form of the universal system, Sorokin speaks directly to the future of the West. The pattern he gives is *crises, catharsis, charisma and resurrection*. At present, the West stands in the middle of sensate civilization, awaiting the final two stages of charisma and resurrection. The West awaits new leadership that can inspire and lead it to a rebirth in spirit and society, mind and body, individual and collective. But then eventually, since each stage is temporary, the next stage (ideational) will emerge from the integrated stage and the pendulum will continue. But can these categories themselves be transcended? Given the empirical evidence of history and the structure of the real, for Sorokin the answer would be in the negative, at least at the level of the social system. Individually one might adopt a view of the real that is neither ideational, integrated nor sensate, but nihilistic. This latter view, however, does not lead to a social system.

Sarkar is particularly rich as a predictive and interpretive theory of the future.<sup>8,9</sup> From Sarkar, we have his theory of social cycle; his theory of civilization; and his vision of the future. Appropriate questions to begin an analysis include: Which *varna* will lead next? Which stage are we in now? Will the cycle move forward or will there be a reversal? Which civilizations or ideology will continue and which will collapse or cause oppression? Certainly from the Sarkarian view the former communist (*ksattriyan*) nations are now moving into their Vipran era. Will this era be dominated by the church or the university, and how long will it be before these new intellectuals become technocrats for the capitalist era to emerge? For the nations or groups presently in the capitalist cycle where will the new workers' evolution or revolution come from? And what of the centralization of power that ensues? What will a *ksattriyan* (warrior/military) USA look like?



Batra reminds us that historically it is these *ksattriyan* eras that are often seen as the golden ages—at least for those in the centre of the empire—as they provide security and welfare for citizens and expand wealth. *Ksattriyan* nations also expand physically. Will space be the final frontier?

We can also use Sarkar's theory of civilizations and movements to gauge their possible success. Do these new movements—feminist, ecological, ethnic, regional, and consumer—have the necessary characteristics to create a new system? Do they have an authoritative text, leadership, a theory of political economy, spiritual practices, fraternal universal outlook, and theory of being/consciousness? Are there any ideologies that fulfil this criteria for success? Answering these questions would aid in understanding the long term future of the new movements.

From Toynbee we can ask, which civilizations can meet the numerous technological and ecological survival challenges facing humanity? Which civilizations will find their development arrested as they are unable to deal with the coming challenges? Will there be a spiritual rebirth that revitalizes the present? Is a Universal State next? Or is the next stage a Universal Church? Who and where are the upcoming creative minority? Will Western civilization survive or will it go the way of historical declines? If there is a spiritual rebirth, who will lead it and how will it come about?

Braudel, Kondratieff and other world system theorists offer a theory of economic cycles and war. Are we ready to enter a new expansion or a contraction? If contraction, should we anticipate a global depression? Is war the most likely future since there is no longer a dominant hegemon? What will be the form of the new expansion, and where will it be located? For Kondratieff and other long wave theorists, it is these questions of power and control that derive from the economic that must be asked.

From Ssu-Ma Ch'ien the economic is not an important variable; rather, questions of leadership and the balance of nature are. For example, who will be the sage-leader that will return the tao and restore balance in China–West relations? In Russia, is Yeltsin or his successor the new sage-king that ends the tyrannical dynasty or merely a short term revival in the longer term degeneration? Who is the sage-leader (king) that will provide the similar restructuring for North–South relations? Which nations have moved away from virtue and are now ruled by tyrants? Is the world system moving according to tao or are there other forces at work? Can government and learning be restored so that there is social balance? How can unity among schools of thought in the nation and in the family become the dominant trend? As important, how can we reorder our understanding of history and future so to more accurately to reflect the lessons of virtue and morality?

From Spengler the critical variable or tool for understanding the future is the lifecycle of culture. Following Spengler we would attempt to locate cultures in the pattern of the lifecycle. We would ask, which cultures are in the final days and which cultures are renewing themselves through interaction with other cultures? We could also ask, which cultures are rising and which new cultures are emerging? For example, is Islamic culture in its final stages because of the new religiosity, or is it still expanding because of the recent emergence of the money spirit? Indeed, world fundamentalism could be seen from a Spenglerian view as the last breath of dying cultures. Given that great souls create new cultures, we can survey the world landscape and speculate which thinkers/activists/leaders might potentially create a new culture.

For Vico the next stage in history can be delayed or even eliminated. The final stage of barbarism can be avoided by a warrior-king, a mythic hero. There are also breakouts

or disjunctions in these stages. As with other macrohistorians, we should not attempt to develop empirical indicators for each era, stage of gods, heroes, men and barbarism; rather, the effort is insight and interpretation. But we can ask, what stage we might be in: are we in the age of barbarians now? Is there a spiritual (Christian) revitalization that can move us out of the cycle? Is the age of the Gods next?

To Pareto and Mosca the theory of elites is paramount. What will be the level of elite circulation in the future? Rapid or fixed? Representations of democracy and widespread participation notwithstanding, who are the real functioning elites? Who will the future elites be? Is elite rule the only possible governance design? Also of importance is Pareto's different types of elites: the innovators and consolidators. With respect to Mosca, we can ask whether we are moving from a society of the wealthy, to a society of warriors.

From Comte we can ask, have we reached the end of the Positive stage? Or, since only a few nations have completely entered the Positive stage, is there still a long wait until the rest of the world joins in and become developed? Or, does the collapse of communism and decline of Islam (in political power if not in mass numbers) signify the continued movement of positivism? Indeed, the present can be construed as a validation of Comte and Smith, among others. Liberalism has become the dominant ideology; the scientific worldview remains the official global ideology.

From Hegel we search for the location of the *Geist*. Which society has solved basic, historical contradictions? Some argue that the *Geist* has shifted from the US to Japan as perhaps the Japanese have conquered the contradictions of individual and family in the form of their state. Who will the new world historical leaders be? And if we follow Hegel's conclusions, should not we see the ultimate resolution of the *Geist* in the form of a world state either through the victory of one state or through some type of consolidation? In the Hegelian view, the variables that we should focus on are the dialectics of the spirit, the power of the state, and rare world leaders.

From Marx (with renewal from Wallerstein) we can ask, has the end of communism mainly furthered commodification of the world (the proletarianization of Eastern Europe)? Will the dramatic and total success of capitalism and its eventual transformation lead to socialism? Are we closer to global socialism than ever before? Will the new electronic and genetic technologies change social relations, or will they merely further commodify workers?

From Adam Smith it is not only the future of the market as a hegemonic metaphor and a site of economic exchange that we should look for but Smith's other key category as well: that of love for the other and love for self as the causal mechanism of social change. Will the future see a society that combines love or self-love or will this combination fail to emerge and lead to civilizational decline?

Spencer's theory and his biological metaphor predicts a world government which would function as the brain of civilization. This world government would also end the rebarbarization of civilization (the world wars). Spencer also predicts a new societal stage neither barbarous, militant nor industrial. He writes: 'But civilization does not end with the industrial. A possible future type might emerge'.

Different as much from the industrial as this does from the militant—a type which, having a sustaining system more fully developed than any we know at present, will use the products of industry neither for maintaining a militant organization not exclusively for material aggrandizement; but will devote them to the carrying on of higher activities.<sup>10</sup>

But Spencer does not detail the contours of this new society. He merely writes that:

As the contrast between the militant and the industrial types is indicated by inversion of the belief that individuals exist for the benefit of the State into the belief that the State exists for individuals; so the contrast between the industrial type and the type likely to be evolved from it is indicated by inversion of the belief that life is for work into the belief that work is for life.<sup>11</sup>

In this vision it would be the individual businessman that would lead society onwards. According to economist Robert Nelson, 'in social Darwinism, the successful businessman was among the chosen, now the central agent in the evolutionary progress of mankind. Herbert Spencer believed that the end result of progress would be a world without government, marked by altruism in individual behavior'.<sup>12</sup>

From Eisler the relevant questions relate to gender. What might the partnership society look like? What are its contours and contradictions? How will it come about? What are the supporting trends? What of the contradictory trends which show increased androgyny throughout the planet? Will the partnership society then revert to a cyclical or pendulum social formations or will it continue unabated through the future?

Eisler argues that we hunger for stories about new Eves and Adams. By calling attention to ancient Western goddess myths, the Gaia hypothesis, as well as the softer partnership dimensions in all the world's religions, human agency can help create the new story. Eisler gives us many examples of individuals telling a new story, but her main argument is, echoing Kenneth Boulding, if it exists, it can be.<sup>13</sup> That is, if there are examples of partnership societies either now or in history, we can create a global civilization based on such ethics and values. If it has existed, it can be. By returning to history, she reminds us that such cultures did exist. By foraging through the present and history, she tells us what went wrong, how our pedagogy, our daily actions, our children's stories, our scholarship, our theories all reaffirm the dominator myth. By envisioning an alternative future she intends to create what can be.

Polak focuses specifically on the image of the future. Those collectivities with no vision of the future decline: those with a positive image of the future—transcendental and immanent—advance. Humanity especially now needs a positive image of the future so as to create a new tomorrow. For Boulding, given the power of human agency, the future cannot be forecasted. The image of the future cannot be predicted. As with cultural historian William Irwin Thompson, the image emerges organically at an unconscious mythological level. Mythology cannot be categorized nor rationally created—it is constantly changing, always more than what we can know. But although the future cannot be predicted, we can assert that history follows a rise and fall related to the image of the future.

We can also ask: why do some societies develop compelling images of the future and others do not? Answering this question would lead to a more complete theory of history. Like Eisler, Boulding's view of the future leads her to develop political strategies in which associations attempt to imagine and commit to their preferred future. A central part of this imagination is faith in the realization of the preferred future. To develop this faith—a concrete belief in a future possibility—Boulding advocates developing future histories in which individuals after imagining their vision develop strategies for how this vision came to be. From these timelines, hope that tomorrow can be changed is gained. Agency thus overcomes structure.

Sarkar advocates global *samaj* (society, people) movements that challenge nationalism, capitalism and the dogma of traditional religions. Locally and globally active, these movements, Sarkar believes, will transform the inequities of the current world capitalist

system. Coupled with spiritual leadership, Sarkar is hopeful that a new phase in human history can begin.

These macrohistorians aid in transforming the discourse away from the litany of minor trends and events to a macro level of stages and grand causes. While their stages do not provide concrete data for policy making, they provide an alternative way of thinking about the future. The stages also give the study of the future an anchor, a structure from which debate or dialog becomes possible. Otherwise, thinking about the future remains idiosyncratic, overly values based.

## Conclusion

Now, are there any final conclusions that we can make about macrohistory and the future—the social shape of space/time/perspective? First, one central variable in understanding the rise and fall of collectivities is creativity. This is counterpoised to imitation. Creativity leads to expansion, growth, more wealth, more power or inner development. Creativity comes from challenge and is gained through experience. External factors such as resources, geography, invasions are important to macrohistorians but they are not central.

Second is the structure of the stages of history—the *double dialectic*. William Irwin Thompson in his review of macrohistory says it like this:

The model of four seems to be a persistent one; it recalls the rule of four in the Indian caste system, Plato, Vico, Blake, Marx, Yeats, Jung and McLuhan. So many people look out at reality and come up with a four-part structure that one cannot help but think that it expresses the nature of reality and/or the Kantian *a priori* pure categories of understanding. But whether the structure exists in reality or is simply a project of the categories of the human mind is, of course, the traditionally unanswerable question of science.<sup>14</sup>

Sorokin has his three stages but there is a fourth stage, a kind of chaotic stage where reality is not fixed at any particular point. This is Sarkar's *Shudra* era, Galtung's notion of plastic time, or Foucault's postmodern world. Steiner argues that we need a balanced society with three autonomous spheres: the economic, the cultural and the political. All these three interact with the fourth, the environment. In any case, the notion of stages is critical. History must be placed into categories which while simplifying the real at the same time give us more information about a particular age than a mere summation of the particular events of the time.

These stages also directly relate to various metaphysical causes or positions (contradictions or *dilemmas*): mind/body; good/evil; internal/external; expansion/contraction; accumulation/distribution; absolute/relative; theory/data, to mention a few. Any theory of past or of future must confront these basic dilemmas. The weakness in many studies of the future is that these are brushed aside as issues not relevant for tomorrow's society.

The contradiction between city and pasture too must be explained; between the civilized and the barbaric; the courageous and the weak; and the unified and fragmented. For Khaldun it was clear that the urban world brought about the end of *asabiya*. Indeed this concept is central for Spengler's theory of history. Urbanization led to the decline of culture and to mass civilization for Spengler. For others such as Durkheim and Smith, it was the urban world that brought about progress, reduced disease led to economic growth, rationalized the irrationality of pagan religions. The city aided in the development of democratic society and helped move away from traditional society.

However, there must be ways to link the stages. How does each one emerge? The pattern used most often is the *dialectic*. Each stage emerges naturally out of the previous because of the internal contradictions in the previous stage. Sorokin has his principle of limits, Marx and Hegel their dialects, Ssu-Ma Ch'ien has his *yin* and *yang*. The theory of linking historical stages then becomes one of the most important tools in understanding what the future stage might be. The link gives us insight into how the present can or will transform into the future.

When a macrohistory posits a new society which is to be created (as with Marx and Sarkar), then we have the necessity of a vanguard. These are always the minority as Pareto and Mosca have pointed out. They have special access to the real whether because of transcendental reasons, reasons of struggle, or because the system in itself creates their possibility. They are Hegel's world historical leaders, Sarkar's *sadvipras* (balanced leaders), Gramsci's organic intellectuals, Khaldun's bedouins or Toynbee's creative minority.

The link between leadership and historical structure is crucial to understanding the possibilities of the future, of the plausibility of creating a different society. For Eisler, Sarkar, Marx, and Gramsci, leadership can transform historical structure. For others such as Khaldun and Ssu-Ma Ch'ien, even as leaders create the future they are bounded by the structures of history, of the rise and fall of virtue, *asabiya*, of the pendulum swings of materialism and idealism. For Hegel, leaders appear to have agency but in fact are used by the cunning of Reason. Leaders merely continue the onward march of the spirit. But for Toynbee, leadership in the form of the creativity minority can keep a civilization from decline, moving it from strength to strength. By meeting internal and external challenges, they can avoid becoming a dominant imitative majority. But for others such as Spengler, once culture has degenerated into mass/mob civilization and the money spirit has become dominant, there is little any leader can do—the lifecycle of the culture cannot be changed, and death inevitably follows life.

Unlike futurists, who speak of disjunction, of bifurcation, of technology transforming the grand patterns of history, macrohistorians by using metaphors such as the birth and death of the individual and the natural world remind us of what does not change, what cannot change. They impose limits of what can be created in the future. But macrohistory is not static. Indeed, it is the macrohistorian's theory of change that is often the insight needed to transform self and other.

As with futurists who do not locate their own work with an episteme, macrohistorians often speak from a view outside of history. While leading to a certain arrogance this also gives the theory a certain legitimacy, a certain empirical finality. Yet, history is spoken of in dramatic terms, as art, poetry, and as prophecy, not in terms of right or wrong, but in terms of creating a mythic distance from the present.<sup>15</sup> Without this prophetic dimension, this privileged perspective of past, present and future, their works would be mere academic treatises that reflect upon history but do not recreate it. Like futures studies, macrohistory is intended to recreate history and future.

## Notes and references

1. The macrohistorians used for this article include: Ssu-Ma Ch'ien, St. Augustine, Ibn Khaldun, Giambattista Vico, Adam Smith, G. W. F. Hegel, Auguste Comte, Karl Marx, Herbert Spencer, Vilfredo Pareto, Gaetano

- Mosca, Max Weber, Oswald Spengler, Teilhard de Chardin, Pitirim Sorokin, Arnold Toynbee, Rudolf Steiner, Fernand Braudel, Fred Polak, Prabhat Rainjan Sarkar, Elise Boulding, Riane Eisler and Gaia herself.
2. Sorokin devises his stages from empirical data and from asking the question of what is real. The answers are (1) matter is real, (2) mind is real, (3) both are real, (4) nothing is real, (5) one cannot know. Responses 4 and 5, even if true, cannot lead to a meaningful society. The other three can, creating the sensate, ideational and integrated society. Change occurs since human beings have a richer spectrum of needs than any particular social formation can satisfy. Once society reaches the sensate gutter, i.e. from ideational to integrated to sensate, then the desire for guidance, for the fulfilment of other needs pulls it upward again. Until the next swing.
  3. Faj, A., *Vico's basic law of history in Finnegans wake*. In *Vico and Joyce*, ed. D. P. Verene. State University of New York Press, New York, 1987, pp. 22–23.
  4. Sarkar believes history is the cyclical rotation of four collective psychologies—the worker, warrior, the intellectual and the merchant. Each era dialectically emerges from the previous one. In the final merchant phase, there is massive exploitation of the other psychologies, leading to a worker's revolution.
  5. Eisler, R., Cultural shifts and technological phase changes: the patterns of history, the subtext of gender, and the choices for our future. Research paper, Center for Partnership Studies, PO Box 51936, Pacific Grove, California 93950, USA, 1995, p. 1. A much revised version of this paper, appeared as: Eisler, R., Dominator and partnership shifts. In *Macrohistory and Macrohistorians*, eds J. Galtung and S. Inayatullah. Praeger, New York, 1997, pp. 141–151. According to Eisler, '*Cultural transformation theory* proposes that history is neither linear, cyclical, nor purely random, but the outcome of the interaction of two types of movements. The first is the tendency of social systems to move from less to more complex forms of organization largely due to technological breakthroughs or *phase changes*. The second is the movement of *cultural shifts* between two basic models or "attractors" for social and ideological organization which I have called the *dominator* and *partnership* models—or more specifically, *androcracy* and *gylany*' (p. 1).
  6. Etzioni, A. and Etzioni-Halevy, E. (eds), *Social Change*. Basic Books, New York, 1973, p. 4.
  7. *Ibid.*, p. 5.
  8. Inayatullah, S., Sarkar's spiritual–dialectics: an unconventional view of the future. *Futures*, 1988, **20**(1), 54–65.
  9. Inayatullah, S., *Situating Sarkar*. Gurukul Publications, Brisbane, 1998.
  10. Spencer, H., *Structure, Function and Evolution*. Michael Joseph, London, 1971, p. 169.
  11. *Ibid.*
  12. Nelson, R., Why capitalism hasn't won yet. *Forbes* 25 November, 106 (1991).
  13. In conversation with Elise Boulding, Brisbane, 9 July 1996.
  14. Thompson, W. I., *At the Edge of History*. Harper and Row, New York, 1971, p. 78.
  15. Nandy, A., The futures of dissent. *Seminar*, 1997, **460**, 45.