

## ***Ibn Khaldun on “Political Change”***

**Abbas Manoochehri**

Associate Professor of Political Science  
Tarbiat Modares University, Tehran Iran.

---

**Abstract:** *One of the enduring questions in the Social Sciences regards the genesis of "political change". Ibn Khaldun is considered as a founding figure of sociology who has provided one of the original answers to this question. Ibn Khaldun, however, is actually a thinker whose "vision and method" is not confined to Sociology or Philosophy of History, nor is the significance of his thought to be confined to a past historical era. This paper discusses Ibn Khaldun's contribution to the question of political change via his Elm al Umran (the life Science).*

**Keywords:** *Ibn Khaldun, political order, political authority, political situation, Elm al Umran (the Science of Social life), Assabiyya (solidarity).*

---

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

In recent years, Ibn-Khaldun's thought has been the subject of a rising interest which extends over various disciplines such as psychology, international relations, and Globalization studies. Ives Lacoste believes that Ibn Khaldun has taken great steps in social thought far beyond his own time. Robert Cox too believes that the essential aspect of what Ibn Khaldun called *asabiyya* can be considered as a significant methodological tool for the study and understanding “change” in the world arena. In “Towards a Post-Hegemonic Conceptualization of World Order”, Cox employs Ibn-Khaldun's ideas for reconsidering the conventional principles in the study of international relations. (Manoochehri, 2011) Farhang Rajaei too has applied Ibn Khaldun's theoretical scheme in the study of the changes taking place at the Global level. (Rajaei: 2000).

Notwithstanding all these important references to the significance of Ibn-Khaldun and serious application of his contribution to contemporary social thought, there is still much to be discussed as regards his significance. Ibn Khaldun is not just a historian or a sociologist, he is in fact the forerunner for the invention of the field of knowledge which in eighteenth century was attempted by Giambattista Vico as "new science", and later in the nineteenth century, by Wilhelm Dilthey as *Geisteswissenschaften* (Cultural Science). In the fifteenth century, Ibn Khaldun had already introduced *elm-al umran* (the science of the social) in distinction from traditional historical craft and as a new science to study dynamics of socio-political life.

### **2. THE TIME AND LIFE OF IBN KHALDUN**

Abd al-Rahman Ibn Khaldun was born in Tunisia on May 1332 AD and received his customary education in the traditional sciences. He started his career early by holding posts in various courts in North Africa and Spain. (Nassar: 1980) Persistent and widespread political strifes along with plague in North Africa of the 14<sup>th</sup> century made Ibn Khaldun's era a turbulent historical time.

Ibn Khaldun's life can be divided into three periods: The first period began when he was twenty years of age (1352). This was the period of his professional political life serving *sultans* in various parts of north west Africa and Spain and lasting for twenty years. During this period, he served as the ambassador of the Sultan of Granada to Pedro the Cruel, the Christian king of Castile in 1363. While holding offices, he was personally engaged in sociopolitical matters and became well acquainted with tribal life. (Shaykh, 1984: p. 8) The second period lasted four years (1372-1376) during which time he was in seclusion in *ben-salameh* Burg where he worked on his *Mugaddimah*. He then returned to Tunisia and finished the *Mughaddamah* there in 1382. And finally was the third period of juridical and academic work in Egypt, where he died at the age of 74 in 1406. (Farookh: 1970)

Ibn Khaldun wrote few scholarly works but his *Mughaddimah* (Prolegama) turned out to be a pathbreaking work and a distinguished contribution to human intellectual history. His other works consist of mere four essays and a book besides his major work *Al Ebar*, a part of which is *Mughaddimah*. These works are: 1- Treaties on Logic, 2- Treaties on Mathematics (according to Averossis's book on *Mathematics*), 3- A summary of Fakhre Razi's *Almuhassel*; 4- A commentary on Averossis's *Shafa'l sa'el le tahzib al masa'el* (The healing of the enquirer and the solution of problems). This book was written in light of the disputes among Suffis in fourteenth century (late Eight centry of Hejra). (Hasry Sate': 1960) *Al Ebar* was a forgotten work until Ottoman's time. In Europe, *De Sacy* translated parts of *Mughaddimah* in 1806, and in 1821 *Von Hammer* introduced the outlines of the *Mughaddimah*. In 1835 *Grefve* wrote a paper in English on Ibn Khaldun, and then, in his "History of Philosophy" *Flint* referred to Ibn Khaldun's *Mughaddimah* as a great work. In 1863 *DeSlane* translated it into French, and in 1899 *Gumplowicy* wrote a chapter of his book on sociology about Ibn Khaldun as "an Arab Sociologist of the Fourteenth century". (Shaykh: 13-14) Finally, in 1967 Rosental translated *Mughaddimah* into English.

### 3. BEYOND PHILOSOPHY OF HISTORY

In his "Lectures on Philosophy of History", Hegel has identified three types of writing History, namely, "Original history", "Reflective history", and "Philosophical history". "Original history", according to him, "records the deeds of a people and a time; "Reflective history", "records the deeds of the past, but embodies the spirit of later age and interprets the past in terms of it. This type is itself of four kinds: a) "Universal" history, which "records the whole history of a people a country or the world. b) "Pragmatic history which attempts to assimilate the past to the present and to drive lessons for the present. c) "Critical" history, which "assesses the sources and plausibility of other historical accounts." d) Histories of specific fields. Finally, "Philosophical" history uses the results of original and reflective history to interpret "history as the rational development of spirit in history." (Hegel: 1956 1-8)

This categorization can help understanding Ibn-Khaldun's enterprise. He starts his *Mughaddimah* by "critical history" of Muslim histories. Then, by trying to go beyond the mere historical "facts", he does a "reflective history" through the systematic interpretation of the historical facts. Then, he intends to learn lessons from history and apply them to his own time by doing a "pragmatic history".<sup>1</sup> Such historical writing involved a vision which was distinct from the Islamic tradition of writing history. In his vision, History is:

informing about human society, ... the qualities which happen to the nature of this society, like savagery, coexistence, solidarities and all kinds of man's conquests and domination of one group by another and what results from these solidarities and dominations, ... and what man attains by his efforts and his works, like professions, subsistence, knowledges and arts and other habits and conditions which result from the nature of this society".(Ibn Khaldun: 1967)

By such vision, Ibn-Khaldun provided a framework which would reveal the social dynamics of human history and went far beyond the established norms of historical thinking. According to this conception:

the method for distinguishing right from wrong in historical information on the grounds of inherent possibility or absurdity is to investigate human social organization, which is identical with civilization. We must distinguish the conditions that attach themselves to the essence of civilization as required by its very nature, the things that are accidental and can not be counted on; and the things that cannot possibly attach themselves to it. (Ibid: 39)

By this theoretical undertaking, which looked at the political, social, and cultural aspects of a civilization as a totality in flux, Ibn Khaldun did not merely seek to "pass through" history but intended to "pass beyond it.. and reveal its secrets through comprehension and the analysis of the nature and causes of historical events. (Mahdi, 1964: 6) His therefore is a historiography which firstly

---

<sup>1</sup> In fact he does this in a way very similar to what Hans Georg Gadamer has done in his philosophical Hermeneutics, considered as phronesis. It is the fusion of history and ethics which is a distinguished aspect of Gadamer's phronesis and the final stage of Ibn khaldun's enterprise.

is a "Reflective History" by which historical change is explained and then accordingly a normative (political) vision of society is built up:

I have covered everything that I could regarding the origin of races and states and the contemporaneity of the early nations. Also, the reasons for revolution and decay of nations in the past, and what comes to be such as state and nation... and what has come to pass and what can come to be. (Ibid: 43)

However, instead of using *Tarikh* (History), Ibn Khaldun invents the new discipline of *elm al umran*, or the Knowledge of Social Life. This discipline, which he considers as "an independent science", has "social organisation" as its subject matter, a science which

has its own peculiar problems, that is, explaining in turn the conditions that attach themselves to the essence of civilization. [Its object] .. does not belong to rhetoric,...(represented in Aristotle's *Organon*)... whereby the mass is moved to accept or reject a particular opinion. It is also not politics, because politics is concerned with the administration of home or city in accordance with ethical and philosophical requirements, for the purpose of directing the mass toward a behavior that will result in the preservation and permanence of the species. ... . In a way, it is an entirely original science.( Ibn khaldun: 3)

Ibn Khaldun calls this "new science" *Elm al umran* three essential elements of which are *umran*, *ebar* and *asabiyya*.

#### **4. UMRAN (THE SOCIAL LIFE)**

*Umran* is an arabic term with the root word of *umr*, or "life". *Umran* means a certain interrelated set of relations which evolves and changes through time. The material necessities of life, namely *Ma'ishat*<sup>2</sup> conditions the formation of *umran*, which can be *badavi* (sedentary) where and when people have to relocate persistently due to environmental limitations and the requirements of subsistence. It could, on the other hand, be *hadhary* (settled) where the settlement of cities are allowed by the existing natural abundance and sufficient means for protection against various threats. Each formation in itself develops objective relations, rules of social conduct, taboos, and sense of belonging.

*Umran* also refers to "political authority and dynasties", "savagery and sociability" and also different "ways of making a living". "[D]ifferent ways by which one group of human beings achieves superiority over another ..." As such then, *umran* is a "very complex" notion which "covers everything from geographical and demographic notion of *oikoumene* (the settled world) to sociability." (Lacoste: 93) <sup>3</sup>

As such, the notion of *umran* was unprecedented both in western and Islamic intellectual tradition. In the Greek thought there was an ethical conception of *polis* which was a peculiar type of early city-social formation and was conceived to be the necessary context for the moral development of individual citizens. In the Middle Ages, *societas civilis* replaced *polis* and was defined as the extension of family hierarchy with peace as its main characteristic. In the Muslim thought, on the other hand, the notion of *medina*, very much resembling the Greek *polis*, was applied. *Umran* refers to social organization in a different way and signifies the fact that:

[H]uman beings have to dwell in common and settle together in cities and hamlets for the comfort of companionship and for the satisfaction of human needs, as a result of the natural disposition of the human beings toward co-operation in order to be able to make a living... . *Umran* may be ... found in outlying regions and mountains.... Or it may be sedentary as found in the cities, villages, towns, and small communities that serve the purpose of protection and fortification by means of walls. In all these different conditions, there are things that affect civilization essentially in as far as it is social organization. (Ibn khaldun: 43)

---

<sup>2</sup> This is identical with what Karl Marx defines as "material life".

<sup>3</sup> Translation of Ibn khaldun's *Al Mugaddimah* by Franz Rosenthal. Yves Lacoste has used this edition with following Bibliographical address: *The Mugaddimah: An introduction to History*, Bollingen Series **XL111**, New York, Pantheon Books, 1958, 3 vol.

As such, umran is determined by the material conditions of its formation. For, according to Ibn Khaldun, "differences in nations' customs" and their "ways of living" is actually "the result of the difference in their economic life." (Rosenthal: 91) With such conception, Ibn Khaldun proposes his elm al umran (the science of social life) as a theory of social formations and political change. Accordingly he undertakes to formulate a comprehensive framework to study the socio-structural process of formation and transformation of life-worlds and political systems. The subject matter of elm-al umran then is human life in association with others and subjection to rules and necessities of social life within space and time:

Sociality is inevitable and necessary for mankind, otherwise man's being and God's will through man and his viceregentship would not actualize. And this is the meaning of umran which we consider as the subject matter of this disciplin. (Ibid: 47)

## 5. UNDERSTANDING "CHANGE"

Elm al umran is formulated upon the methodological notion of ebar (understanding) and the theoretical concept of asabiyya (solidarity). Instead of using khabar, that pertained to matters like "geographical fact", or "an event of recent history", or "a miraculous happening", Ibn Khaldun begins his historical analysis with ebar. (Ibid: 114, 202, 203) For him, it was important "not to give reports about the past generations [but] understand events. Such 'understanding' is attainable only if one applies suitable methods for historical knowledge. Criticising analogical reasoning in historical investigation, Ibn Khaldun identifies such an approach, along with 'forgetfulness and negligence', as a factor which may "sway man from his purpose and diverts him from his goal". (Ibid: 25-26) To apply knowledge of the present to historical information is a great error and to have "an accurate" understanding of history, one ought to be aware of the "changes that conditions have undergone." (Ibid: 27) Therefore,

History refers to events that are peculiar to a particular age or race. Discussion of the general condition of the region, race, and periods constitutes the historian's foundation. Most of his problems rest upon that foundation and his historical information derives clearly from it. (Ibid: 29).

Accordingly, Ibn Khaldun proposes to do historical study by what he calls ebar. Ebar is the plural of ibra, a word rooted in ibr which means "passing on, over, through, by, or beyond". (Mehdi: 65) It seems that the underlying meaning of the concept, in both its subjective and objective dimensions, is that of 'connecting two points'. The concept ebarat (clause) as the linguistic means for communication also comes from the same root.<sup>4</sup> Ebar also means 'going beyond borders', 'moving from without to within', and also 'migration', 'translation', or even 'removing a ruler'. Ebar is also "deep penetration into the thoughts and disposition of someone else and also internalizing the reality of an event or a matter." (Lacoste: 180) Therefore, by using ebar "the nature of society and civilization, and also what happens in them...[is revealed] so that the unknown facts, neglected and hidden from the eyes, like oppression, are discovered" (Ibid: 8, 9). As such there seems to be a synonymy between Ibn-Khaldun's ebar and Dilthey's methodological notion of verstehen (understanding). Verstehen, provides the historian with the means to look into the historical information with 'sympathetic intuition' without exclusive reliance either upon facts as such or upon abstract syllogism. (Dilthey, 1961: 64-82) Instead, it is oriented towards the meaning which resides behind the social phenomena. It is, therefore in contrast to reasoning that ebar, like verstehen propose a better historical appreciation of facts and events.<sup>5</sup>

Ibn Khaldun's ingenious notion of ebar is further complemented by basira (insight) by which "critical" and "dynamic" moments become methodological indispensability. He suggests that historians should not be too easy towards historical facts and should apply "critical" judgments to these facts "the intelligent critic must judge for himself as he looks around, examining this, admiring

<sup>4</sup> Aristotle's *peri herminia* is translated into Arabic as Al-ebara

<sup>5</sup> Ebar is also similar to the Weberian notion of "sinnhafte adaequenz". According to Weber:

The interpretation of a coherent course of conduct is "adequate on the level of meaning" insofar as, according to our habitual modes of thought and feeling, its component in their mutual relation are recognized to constitute a complex of meaning... (Weber. p. 11).

that, and choosing the other. (Ibn Khaldun: 24). The impact of change on the reality under investigation must also be taken into consideration:

[A] hidden pitfall in historiography is disregard for the fact that with the change of periods and the passage of time conditions within nations and races change (Ibid: 25).

## **6. THE SOCIAL PHILOSOPHY OF "SOLIDARITY"**

Another central notion in the *elm al umran* is *asabiyya* (solidarity). Applying his critical method of *ebur* to the frequently observable data, namely that of political strife and social instability, he reaches at the theoretical construct of *asabiyya*. According to Ibn Khaldun, *asabiyya* comes from blood relationship "or something corresponding to it":

For, blood ties (*elteham*) is something natural among men, with the rarest exception. It leads to affection for one's relations and blood relatives.....If the direct relationship between persons who help each other is very close, so that it leads to close contact and unity, the ties are obvious and clearly require the [existence of a feeling of solidarity] without any outside [prodding].(Ibid: 98)

*Asabiyya* is rooted in *s-b* which denotes binding, and derived from the verb *asaba* which means 'he twisted'. *Asabiyya* then means 'men twisted together' by some form of proximity. *Asabiyya*, as filiative solidarity is very much related to the natural environment and simplistic life system of family and tribal bond. For Ibn Khaldun, *asabiyya* is a two-edged historical phenomenon, it is a simple life system of mutual belonging and egalitarian relationships. It, however, is not a psychological term, for, it pertains to a "complex sociological reality", with significant psychological implications. As such, *asabiyya* "produces the ability to defend oneself, to offer opposition, to protect oneself, and to press claims. Whoever loses it is too weak to do any of these."(Ibid: 103, 111)

*Asabiyya* comes through *Elteham* (filial bond), and *Sale rahem* (family bond) which is the Arabic word for a natural emotion of attachment between family members. Also it results from *Vala'* (mutual help) and *Halef* (the bond of friendship). (Ibn Khaldun: p.98) As such *Asabiyya* has been translated variously as 'the vitality of the state', 'the life of the people', 'Lebenskraft', 'public spirit', "esprit de corps", 'social solidarity', 'group cohesion' and 'common will'. It, therefore, resembles as much Durkheim's *amé collective* as the Weberian notion of *genossenschaft*, in both of which a social and human bond is the forming tread of a life form. (Lacoste: 101) *Gemeinschaft* and filiation are thus two terms that can be used to define the notion of *asabiyya*.

As such the peculiarity of *asabiyya* is its explaining the sense of "belonging" which denotes as being subject to the "laws and conditions" of the group. *Asabiyya*, is therefore, more than anything else, a form of "intersubjectivity" which carries social life through time and space. (Cox: 100) It thus can be conceived of as an intersubjective-inner sense of belonging which plays an objective role in social life by mediating between individual and group life. *Asabiyya* then, signifies social and intersubjective cohesion. (Manoochehri: 2011)

## **7. THE RISE AND FALL OF POLITICAL ORDERS**

For Ibn Khaldun "the destiny of political entities" is that of "many intertwined and dialectical contradictions". (Ibid: 158) In any social formation, there is a dialectical relationship between *asabiyya* on the one hand, and the rise and fall of political power, on the other:

The goal to which *asabiyya* leads is political authority. This is because *asabiyya* gives protection and makes possible mutual defense, the pressing of claims, and every other kind of social activity..... This is because political authority results from superiority, (and) superiority results from *asabiyya*..... (Ibn Khaldun: 107, 125, 138)

In the midst of such relationship the political authority goes through several stages of change organically explained by Ibn Khaldun. In the first stage, the ruler successfully overthrows all opposition, and then appropriates authority from the preceding dynasty and claims "all glory for itself":

[G]lory was the common (property) of the group, and all members of the group made an identical effort, their aspirations to gain the upper hand over others and to defend their own possessions were expressed in exemplary unruliness and lack of restraint. They all aimed at fame. (Ibid: 133)

In the second stage the ruler gains complete control over the people and claims all the authority for himself, thereby "excluding and preventing others from trying to have a share in it." (Ibid: 231) In this relation, Ibn Khaldun first uses the notion *al enferade bel majd* that is basically what Max Weber later called sultanism. According to Weber, sultanism:

[T]ends to arise whenever traditional authority develops an administration and a military forces which are purely personal instruments of the master. Only then are the group members treated as subjects. Previously the master's authority appeared as a pre-eminent group right, now it turns into his personal right. (Weber: 231 – 23)

Ibn Khaldun too has explained the process of change taking place in the nature of political authority from *riasa* (rulership) to *al enferade bel majd* (despotism):

Initially, rulers...have to accept and follow the customs and norms from prior to their own time; they undertake much of it and remember the habits of the previous generation. But there appear changes in their norms and differences with the pervious generation show up. (Ibn Khaldun: 25)

In the third stage, leisure and tranquillity are enjoyed as the fruits of the authority. So, new economic and political situation dominates the *umran* and new interrelationships between the new authority and its original *asabiyya* take shape. These interrelationships have dialectical characteristics and tend towards entropy, "these changes continue with the following governments and finally lead to contradictions."(Ibid: 25)

In the fourth stage the ruler is content with what his predecessors have built. In this stage, the ruler wastes on pleasure and amusements accumulated by his ancestors, through generosity to his inner circle. ... The ruler seeks to destroy the great clients of his people and followers of his predecessors. ... He loses a number of his soldier by spending their allowance on his pleasure ... He ruins the foundations his ancestors had laid. ... In this stage, the dynasty is seized by senility and the chronic disease ...from which it is destroyed. (Ibn khaldun: 141-142)

This would finally end in a total political degeneration, whence there exist no concrete relationship between the social basis of power, namely *asabiyya*, and the power structure. (Ibid: 135) Such new political orientations ultimately result in the break up of *asabiyya* and consequently the break down of the existing system:

If the ruler continues to keep a forceful grip on his subjects, *asabiyya* (group feeling) will be destroyed. [His subjects] become fearful and depressed and seek to protect themselves against him through lies,...and deceit... (Ibid: 133, 111) [Hence], the feeling of the people of the dynasty become diseased as a result of the contempt in which they are held and the hostility of the ruler ... .. The great danger inherent in this situation reverts upon the dynasty. There can be no hope it will recover from that illness (Ibid: 147)

## 8. DYNAMICS OF POLITICAL CHANGE

This moment also involves an structural process of change in the relationship between newly formed "*hadhari*" system and other already existing "*badavi*" collectivities, which come to be the power vicinity of the new *hadhari* power system. The moment of resistance by the dominated *badavi*-periphery against the *hadhari*-center.

In Ibn Khaldun's theoretical scheme, the dialectic of domination and revolt is yet another dimension to the dynamics of *asabiyya*. In his view, *hadhary* "center", as a power bastion exercises domination over the "periphery" *badavin*; "in the city there is .. a king whence *badavin* have to submit to him.. The chief obliges the *badavin* ... to submit to him, by will or by force. (Ibn Khaldun: 122) But, the submission of the *badavin* is not a trouble free situation for the *hadhary*-center. Due, once again, to the *asabiyya*, the dominated *badavin* resists the *hadhary* domination and does not submit to it so easily:

*[I]t is easy to establish a dynasty in lands that are free from group feelings (asabiyya). Government there will be tranquil affair, because seditious and rebellious are few, and the dynasty does not need much asabiyya* (Ibn Khaldun, quoted in Lacoste: 104).

At this point, the *asabiyya* of the dominated *badavi*-periphery appears as resistance against the *hadhari*-center. This is the moment of the second dialectic, namely that of Dialectics of Domination and Revolution. Therefore, in a condition of political domination, *asabiyya* plays a role essentially different from its original role as the genesis of political power. This is a rebellious role which

undermines the established power. In other words, *Asabiyya* is simultaneously a will to power and a will to resist. This rebellious undertaking happens when a "rebel revolts, or, by inviting people around himself, gathers power". (Ibn Khaldun:109)

Therefore, as the result of the dual process of the entropic degeneration of *asabiyya* inside the “city” and resisting force of "*badavi*" *asabiyya*, the gripes of city domination over the *badavi* periphery is weakened and challenged. A new force of *asabiyya* is hence formed in the periphery (of power) that challenges the existing, though faltering, power of the center. As the result of this process, a new political authority takes shape.

## **9. A TYPOLOGY OF POLITICAL AUTHORITY**

According to Ibn Khaldun, apart from the "natural authority" formed according the *badavi asabiyya*, two other kinds of political order are possible, one is "rational" and the other is "religious". Natural authority is exercised by causing

*the masses to act as required by purpose and desire...[H]e forces [people] to execute his intentions and desires, ...Disobedience makes itself noticeable and leads to trouble and bloodshed.* (Ibn Khaldun: 155)

Unlike the "natural authority", the "political authority", is ordained "by the intelligent and leading personalities" and causes the people “into the means of furthering their worldly interests and avoiding anything that is harmful in that respect.”(Ibid: 154)

And finally a religiously directed public authority, is

*ordained by God through a lawgiver who establishes them as (religious) laws, the result will be a political (institution) with a religious basis, which will be useful for life in both this and the other world.* (Ibid)

Although, for Ibn Khaldun the religious political authority is essentially different from the natural type, yet, astonishingly enough, both have their bases on the *asabiyya*. The natural authority is the outgrowth of *badavi asabiyya* with a manifest will to power. The religious authority, however, can be established according to the normative potentiality of *asabiyya* actualised by religious reinforcement.

## **10. ASABIYYA, RELIGION AND COMMON GOOD**

In his attempts to normatively answer the questions regarding the order of common life, Ibn khaldun intermingles his notion of *asabiyya* with religious notion of "good". Thereby, he presents an alternative practical answer to the persisting problems. For him, religion is a revolutionary and normative force in history resting upon its relationship with *asabiyya*. Ibn Khaldun considers religion as a self – concious *asabiyya*. In religiosity, an individual will is mediated into collective will. This happens not due to the objective conditions of life but by a moral choice "with God's mediation":

*[I]ndividual desires come together in agreement to press their claims, and hearts become united. The secret of this is that when hearts succumb to false desires and are inclined towards the world, mutual jealousy and widespread differences arise. When they are turned toward the truth and reject the world and whatever is false, and advance towards God, they become one in their outlook. Jealousy disappears, mutual cooperation and support flourishes. As a result, the extent of the state widens, and the dynasty grows."* (Ibid: 125-126)

In the light of such conception, Ibn Khaldun establishes a mutual relationship between religion and *asabiyya*. In his theoretical scheme, he formulates this mutuality as that in which both religion and *asabiyya* are in need of each other while they reinforce the other at the same time. According to him no religion could have succeeded in history without *asabiyya* as its social ground:

*Religious call cannot materialize without asabiyya. This is because every mass (political undertaking) by necessity requires group feeling. This is indicated in Muhammad's saying: "God sent no prophet who did not enjoy the protection of his people". If this was the case with the prophets, who are among human beings those most likely to perform wonders, one would expect it to apply all the more so to others.* (Ibid: 127)

This explains how good life can be achieved for a community when it already has *asabiyya* and religion too comes to its help. In other words, although social deterioration is an inevitable historical

necessity, it can be sustained when *asabiyya* is reinforced by religion. “Asabiyya is necessary to the Muslim community. Its existence enables (the community) to fulfil what God expects of it...” (Ibid: 160)

Therefore, when the force of *asabiyya* is joined with religion, *sittlichkeit*, as social ethos, and *moralitat*, as individual morality, are intertwined.<sup>6</sup> This in turn is so because

*In view of his natural disposition and his power of Reason and Understanding, Man is closer to good qualities than to bad ones. (Ibn khaldun: 111) .....[T]he purpose of human beings is not only their worldly welfare. This entire world is trifling and futile. It ends in death and annihilation. The purpose (of human beings) is their religion, which leads them to happiness in the other world. Therefore, religious laws have as their purpose to cause (them) to follow such a course in all their dealings with God and their fellow men. This (situation) also applies to royal authority, which is natural in human social organization. (The religious laws) guide it along the path of religion, so that everything will be under the supervision of the religious law. (Ibid: 154)*

This is, because people are reoriented by religion and solidarity amongst them is upgraded by mutuality. Therefore a filiative association of different kind would actualise amongst them:

*Religious believes does away with mutual jealousy and envy among people who share in a group feeling, and cause concentration upon the truth. When people come to have the (right) insight into their affairs, nothing can withstand them. ... God's laws among his subjects is nothing but goodness and consideration of their good. (Ibid: 126)*

Therefore, unlike the modern notion of "state of nature" versus "civil state", formulated in theories of Social Contract by Hobbes, Locke, Ibn Khaldun has a vision in which there is a process of deterioration from one political formation into another, from original stage to that of its demies. Ibn Khaldun does not consider the "state of nature" as a state with the lack of organization or authority. But it is the nature of authority which distinguishes them. Like Rousseau, however, he considers the civil stage as an stage of deterioration, which nevertheless can be reconstructed according to rationality or religion.

## 11. CONCLUSION: UMRAN AS AN INTERDISCIPLINARY PARADIGME

In contemporary Philosophy of Social Science there are two fundamental questions answer to which can shape the identity of social science and its potential to answer enduring questions and persisting problems.<sup>7</sup> The first question is the ontological question of "what is there to know about?" The second question regards epistemology, and asks about the way we can or should approach that which we want to know about.

*Elm al umran* answers the first question by a "foundationalist" ontology which believes in the existence of the real world independent of our knowing it. Ibn Khaldun defined the nature of "the Historical" in a novel way as that of social process. In *umran*, coming from *umr*, as *being in time*, human life is conceived as it actually is lived in its sociality and historicity. The social and the political are intertwined because it is the social characteristic of an entity which preconditions any political situation as well as institution.

Epistemological question of what we can know about the world and how we can know is answered by Ibn-Khaldun realistically by observing real or objective relations between social phenomena by using interpretative method to understand socio-historical phenomena.

In the notion of *Umrans*, the dynamic character of social reality makes "sociology" inseparable from "history", and also from "politics". Focusing on precise Social dynamics this dynamics instead of grand historical vision without falling into either idealist vision in which the role of reason and idea is conceived as central, or materialist vision in which the material life condition takes precedence. Ibn takes a psycho-social approach to the dynamics of social formation, life reproduction, and political change.

---

<sup>6</sup> See Hegel's "Philosophy of Right". It has been Hegel's contribution in modern philosophy to explain dialectically the relationship between social ethics and individual morality.

<sup>7</sup> For elaborate treatment of this issue see, Alexander Rosenberg's Philosophy of Social Science, David Marsh and Gerry Stoker's Theory and Method in Political Science.



There is yet another fundamental dimension in Ibn Khaldun's thought which extends the border of its interdisciplinary undertaking even further, namely its normative dimension. This dimension is in certain way the "pragmatic" dimension of writing history and can also be described by its proximity with Hans-George Gadamer's Philosophical Hermeneutics. Following the tradition of Aristotelian practical philosophy, Gadamer considers Philosophical Hermeneutics as a contemporary version of Aristotle's *phronesis*. In Gadamer's hermeneutics, history, interpretation, and ethics are fused in a unique fashion and a paradigmatic shift takes place where the question of "what is to be done" is answered through a dialogue with/in history. Thereby, history is linked to ethics through the "*share of horizons*" and self understanding" can result. (Gadamer: 1971)

Ibn- Khaldun has essentially taken similar approach into the study of history. He has linked his *umran* to the question of *Eudaimonia*. As such *umran* is the kern of an interdisciplinary approach to human experience which can help to throw revealing light on its complicated reality. *Elm al umran* is essentially an interdisciplinary paradigm which has the potential for a paradigmatic shift.

#### REFERENCES

- [1] Cox, Robert (1992) "Towards a Post-Hegemonic Conceptualization of World Order", in James Rosenau and Ernest-Otto Czempel, *Governance Without Government: Order and Change in World Politics*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- [2] Gadamer, H. G (1971) *Philosophical Hermeneutics* trans. D. Linge, Berkeley: University of California.
- [3] Hasry Sate', "Abu Khaldun, Lessons from Ibn Khaldun's Muggaddameh" (Drasat from Ibn khaldun's *Mughaddimah*). Beirut, 1961. In Sheykh, p. 9. Sheykh, Mohammad Ali (1984) *Ibn Khaldun's Thought*, Shahid Beheshti University. Tehran.
- [4] Hegel, W. G. F (1956) *Philosophy of Right*. Dover. New York.
- [5] Heidegger, Martin (1962) *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson. New York: Harper and Row Publishers.
- [6] Ibn Khaldun, A (1967) *Al Muqaddimah*, Tr., F, Rosenthal, Edited and abridged by H.J. Dawood, Princeton, Bollingen, Series.
- [7] Lacoste, Yves (1984) *Ibn Khaldun*, tr., David Macey, London, Verso.
- [8] Manoochehri, Abbas. "Dialectic of Umran in Ibn Khaldun and Social Change", *Hekmat va Falsafeh*, Vol. 6, No. 4, January 2011, pp.39-52.
- [9] Marsh, D. Stoker, G (2002) *Theory and Method in Political Science*. 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition Playgrave. New York..
- [10] Mehdi, Mohsen (1964) *Ibn Khaldun's Philosophy of History*, Chicago, University of Chicago.
- [11] Martin, M., and McIntyre, L (1994) *Readings in the Philosophy of Social Science*, Cambridge Mass, MIT Press.
- [12] Nassar, Nassif (1980) *La Pensee Realiste d'Ibn Khaldun* Presses Universitaires de France. 1967. Persian tr. Y. Rahimloo. Tehran.
- [13] Rajae , Farhang (2000) *Globalization on Globalization on Trial*. International Development Research Centre. Ottawa, Canada
- [14] Rosenberg, Alexander (1988) *Philosophy of Social Science*, Clarendon Press, Oxford.
- [15] -Rosenthal, Franz (1968) *A History of Muslim Historiography*, Lieden, E.J.Brill.
- [16] Roth, Paul (1987) *Meaning and Method in the Social Sciences*, Cornell University Press. Ithaca.
- [17] Weber, Max (1978) *Economy and Society*, 2 vols., Berkeley, University of California Press.