



Society and the State in the Philosophy of Abd al-Rahman Ibn Khaldun

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Abstract:

The evolution of societies, politics, and the issues associated with governance, authority, and war constitute an important part of Ibn Khaldun's philosophy of history, which he incorporated into his philosophy of human civilization (*'umrān basharī*) and the transformations and changes affecting it. Consequently, his philosophy was not detached from his conception of the cyclical succession of history. His perception of the development of society and the state was therefore consistent with this approach. He considered that society and the state undergo significant stages of development during their formation, influenced by a set of cultural, social, religious, and economic factors. The central concept upon which he relied in interpreting the social and political transformations affecting both the state and society is *'asabiyyah* (social cohesion or group solidarity), which constitutes a key notion for understanding his philosophy of history, human civilization, and the issues related to them.

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Ibn Khaldun's theory of society, the state, and politics emerged within the broader context of the era in which he lived. It was also developed as part of his vast intellectual project through which he established an important discipline, namely the science of history, together with the science of human civilization (*'umrān basharī*). Therefore, his political theory cannot be understood outside this context, nor can Ibn Khaldun be separated from his historical period, because what he states in his theory concerning the history of states and peoples stems from the realities he personally experienced and witnessed. Through the facts and examples he mentions throughout his discussion of the science of history, its methodology, and the fields of knowledge related to it, he demonstrates that his reflections originate from lived experience. Likewise, whenever he referred to events of the past, he consistently related them to the realities and conditions of his own time.

His concern with the conditions of societies, their evolution, and the nature and conditions of the state arose directly from his philosophy of history, to which he accorded great importance. Ibn Khaldun explains the purpose for which he composed his book *al-Muqaddimah* by stating: "In this book, we explain the conditions that affect human beings in their social organization, including matters of civilization, kingship, livelihood, sciences, and crafts, through demonstrative methods that clarify the truth for both the learned and the common people, dispel illusions, and remove doubts." His objective was therefore to explain the conditions of human civilization—that is, society—and the various transformations to which it is subjected throughout history. In doing so, he established specific principles and laws for the science of human civilization, namely sociology in the modern sense, as well as for the science of history through a distinct philosophical approach (Khaldun, *History of Ibn Khaldun: al-Muqaddimah*, 1995, p. 220).

His philosophy of society and the state constitutes an essential part of his theory interpreting history and the transformations of human civilization (*'umrān basharī*) in all their geographical, temporal, axiological, civilizational, and critical dimensions. In other words, his political and social philosophy can only be understood within this broader context to which we have referred.

In order to understand the essence of his theory of politics and society, we may begin with the following problematic: in what sense did Ibn Khaldun formulate the question of society and politics within his philosophy?

At the outset, it is necessary to point out two matters that may be considered fundamental:

First, Ibn Khaldun is distinguished by a methodology of his own, characterized by dynamism and dialecticism. He follows an objective realist approach that enables him to investigate historical events and occurrences—that is, what actually happened in reality. Since he relies on historical reports and events as evidence, he remains committed to realism in history. In this respect, Ibn Khaldun transcends the idealist perspective that views history through a supra-historical lens. The condition of objectivity sought by the historian can only truly be achieved through the realist approach, whereas the idealist approach departs, to some extent, from realism and objectivity.

Second, what distinguishes Ibn Khaldun is that, in order to achieve the aims of his inquiries into society and politics, he avoided the controversial issues that had preoccupied many philosophers and jurists. Instead, he was concerned with establishing a new scientific conception of the social and historical phenomena, بعيد from sterile debates. Within this framework, his study of politics and the issues associated with it was conducted independently of the controversies that had characterized the works of his predecessors.

Ibn Khaldun formulated his ideas concerning society, politics, and the state within the framework of his new philosophy of history. He regarded the science of history as one of the most important sciences because of its many merits. In this regard, he states: “Know that history is a noble discipline, abundant in benefits and lofty in purpose, for it acquaints us with the conditions of past nations in their morals, the prophets in their conduct, and kings in their states and policies, so that those who seek guidance in matters of religion and worldly life may benefit from such examples...” (Khaldun, 2000, p. 15).

The questions concerning the science of history—its subject matter, methods, aims, and purposes—led Ibn Khaldun to establish this discipline through methodologies derived from other sciences, such as the science of *ḥadīth*. Consequently, “causal explanation in Ibn Khaldun is closer to the reasoning employed by the scholars of legal theory (*uṣūl al-fiqh*). In fact, if Ibn Khaldun benefited from any particular current within Islamic thought, it was that of the legal theorists. He employed their terminology, such as analogical reasoning from the visible to the absent, analogy between similars and counterparts, and the explanation of agreement and difference. What Ibn Khaldun applied to the course of history closely resembles what the legal theorists applied to questions of religious law” (Subhi, 1985, p. 125). Thus, he considered that historical verification depended upon the use of the same methodological principles employed by the scholars of *ḥadīth*, and accordingly, this perspective came to constitute a theory of history itself.

B- The Stages of Society and History

His political vision of the state and its transformations is grounded in his philosophy of history, through which he interpreted the major transformations affecting societies. These transformations represent stages of transition from one political condition to another, according to a set of elements that he considered to govern such change. Consequently, he believed that societies pass through several stages in their development, namely:

The Stage of Bedouinism (*Badāwah*)

This stage represents the phase preceding urban civilization, for civilization does not emerge directly in history but rather develops progressively through it. Ibn Khaldun considers the Bedouin stage to be the earlier historical phase, or the original condition of society before it evolved and became civilized. “Such is the life of the Bedouins in the deserts, the Berbers in the mountains, and the Tatars in the plains; all of these peoples are not subject to civil laws and are governed only by their needs and customs” (Subhi, 1985, p. 143).

The Bedouin individual is therefore a person who limits himself to necessities for survival, since nature does not permit more than that. At the same time, he is subjected to a harsh mode of life that imposes numerous constraints upon him. This stage

corresponds to what may be termed primitive society, which is characterized by all the previously mentioned features.

The Stage of Urbanization (*Ḥaḍārah*)

Urbanization represents the historical stage that follows Bedouinism, since human consciousness evolves throughout history. Through this evolution, history itself is constructed, and human beings no longer confine themselves to necessities of life but begin to seek luxuries and refinements. Their mode of thinking also changes as society develops and human needs evolve.

Accordingly, social relations and human necessities compel individuals to move from nomadic to sedentary life in matters of food, drink, housing, and even in patterns and styles of thought. It is within this stage that the state and the city are established, and human beings attain stability and settlement.

The Stage of Decline

Once civilization becomes stable and the state and society are founded upon civil principles, and after a strong *'asabiyyah* triumphs and assumes power, thereby consolidating the structure of society, civilization eventually declines and collapses. This occurs because of the presence of various historical factors and influences. Society gradually inclines toward luxury and excess rather than mere necessities, which ultimately leads to its disintegration and fragmentation as a result of indulgence in comfort and opulence. Such conditions accelerate its downfall.

Thus, as soon as the state establishes its existence in history, the signs of its decline and collapse begin to emerge. The very causes that lead to the flourishing and urbanization of the state are themselves the factors that bring about its deterioration. For although civilization constitutes the culmination of human development (*'umrān*), it simultaneously signals the beginning of its end. Foremost among these factors is *'asabiyyah* (group solidarity). It is upon this conception of the movement of history and the evolution of societies that Ibn Khaldun built his philosophy concerning the emergence, development, and decline of the state.

Theory of the State

A- The Necessity of Social Organization and Political Authority

Ibn Khaldun maintains that social organization is necessary in order to secure sustenance and satisfy human needs. Aggression, he argues, is natural among living creatures, and every animal possesses an organ with which it defends itself. Human beings, however, possess only intellect and the hand to achieve this purpose, the latter being naturally suited for the making of tools and instruments. Yet the individual alone is incapable of resisting aggression and therefore requires cooperation with others of his own kind.

Nevertheless, once human beings gather together and civilization (*'umrān*) is established, there must necessarily exist a restraining authority capable of preventing individuals from attacking one another, because human nature contains animal tendencies inclined toward aggression and injustice. The mere possession of weapons, which animals use in mutual aggression, is insufficient to prevent conflict among humans, since such means are available to all alike. Consequently, another force must exist to restrain aggression between individuals. This restraining power must arise from among them and possess supremacy, authority, and coercive power so that no one may transgress against another. This, according to Ibn Khaldun, constitutes the meaning of

kingship (*mulk*). Thus, political authority is a natural characteristic specific to human beings and an indispensable necessity for their existence.

He further notes that forms of organized leadership may also be observed among certain animals, as philosophers had already pointed out, such as bees and locusts, whose conduct reveals wisdom, obedience, and submission to a leader distinguished from the rest in form and physical constitution. However, such organization among animals exists by virtue of instinct and natural guidance, whereas among human beings it exists through intellect and political organization (Matar, 1995, pp. 51–52).

Human societies, according to Ibn Khaldun, evolved from pastoral and nomadic life toward civilized urban existence after acquiring arts and crafts that provided human beings with better nourishment and more suitable dwellings. He also emphasizes the importance of natural factors in the formation of nations, describing the inhabitants of hot regions differently from those of cold or coastal regions. Likewise, he explains the effect of nutrition on the health of nations and discusses the influence of social factors such as customs and traditions on the psychology and morals of peoples.

He believes that social life necessarily requires a political system, and thus the state emerges as the most important social institution when a nomadic group possessing strong *‘asabiyyah* (group solidarity) overcomes others and establishes political authority or kingship. This is because kingship is attained through domination, and domination is achieved through *‘asabiyyah* and the unity of wills in pursuit of common objectives. The unification and reconciliation of hearts, moreover, occur through divine guidance in establishing religion. Political rule is therefore as necessary for human beings as social organization itself.

In this regard, he states that “the ultimate end toward which *‘asabiyyah* tends is kingship.” Human beings, by their very nature, require within every social gathering a restraining force capable of preventing them from harming one another. Such a force must dominate them through *‘asabiyyah*; otherwise, it cannot exercise effective authority. This domination constitutes kingship. For Ibn Khaldun, kingship signifies domination and rule through coercive power. Thus, the ultimate goal pursued by *‘asabiyyah* is political authority.

Ibn Khaldun defines *‘asabiyyah* as the zeal or solidarity that binds relatives and kin together whenever they are threatened by injustice or destruction. Its principal source is lineage, although it must also be reinforced by loyalty and alliances. He cites the example of the *‘asabiyyah* of the Quraysh tribe during the period of the Rightly Guided Caliphs and the Umayyad state, explaining that the caliphate remained within Quraysh, from the time of Abu Bakr until the end of the reign of Marwan II, solely because the *‘asabiyyah* of Quraysh was at that time stronger than all other Arab solidarities. In this sense, *‘asabiyyah* constitutes the driving force of history: upon it the state is founded, and through its weakening the state itself declines (Matar, 1995, p. 52).

The Stages of the State

Once the state comes into existence, however, it becomes subject to a life cycle and passes through successive stages, each possessing its own characteristics. According to Ibn Khaldun, the lifespan of a state may extend over two or three generations, during which it moves from one phase to another. Since he defines a generation as forty years, he states: “A state generally does not exceed this span, whether slightly more or less,

unless some exceptional circumstance intervenes... This lifespan resembles that of an individual person.”

In his view, the state passes through five principal stages, which unfold as follows:

The First Stage: The Struggle for Kingship and the Attainment of Power

This is the stage of foundation and conquest, in which political authority is attained through domination and victory. Such a stage can only be achieved through solidarity grounded in familial and religious *'asabiyyah* (group solidarity), since religion possesses the capacity to unite hearts and secure obedience. At this stage, the ruler does not regard himself merely as the chief of a tribe or clan, but rather imposes his authority upon the subjects (Matar, 1995, p. 53).

Ibn Khaldun describes the Arabs as a people who cannot attain kingship except through a religious mission, because they are among the most difficult nations to govern due to their pride, harshness, lofty ambitions, and rivalry for leadership. Their wills rarely unite. However, when religion, whether through prophecy or sainthood, acts as a restraining force among them, the tendencies toward cunning and rivalry disappear, making obedience and unity easier to achieve. Religion removes harshness and pride and restrains corrupt competition. In this sense, the religious dimension dissolves factionalism and tribal alliances among groups bound by *'asabiyyah* and directs them toward truth. Once they gain clarity regarding their common purpose, nothing can resist them because their direction becomes unified and their objective shared.

Religion therefore unifies them and strengthens kinship ties. If among them there exists a prophet or saint who calls them to fulfill the commands of God, removes from them reprehensible morals, disciplines them, and unites their word in order to establish truth, then they achieve domination and kingship. Moreover, they become among the quickest people to accept truth and guidance because of the soundness of their natural disposition and their freedom from corrupt habits and blameworthy morals.

The Second Stage: Autocracy and the Monopolization of Power

Once authority becomes firmly established, the ruler enters the stage of autocracy by monopolizing power and suppressing rivals who seek participation in rule. He excludes them from affairs of governance and begins forming a mercenary army and an administrative system devoted exclusively to securing his authority. This constitutes the second stage.

Ibn Khaldun describes it as follows: “When the second stage arrives and autocracy and exclusive glory appear, those who once supported him become, in reality, among his enemies. He therefore requires other supporters outside his original group in order to resist them and prevent them from sharing authority.”

The Third Stage: Leisure, Prosperity, and the Enjoyment of Royal Wealth

This stage begins once the autocratic ruler has satisfied his desire for power and turns toward satisfying his remaining desires and enjoying the fruits of his achievements. The first concern of the ruler becomes the organization of state finances and the increase of revenues. Expenditure on urban development, luxury, prosperity, and refinement increases, and the state flourishes through the advancement of crafts, arts, and sciences. According to Ibn Khaldun, “The third stage is one of leisure and tranquility devoted to acquiring the fruits of kingship toward which human nature inclines, such as the accumulation of wealth and the perpetuation of monuments... Thus the ruler exerts his utmost effort in taxation, regulating revenues and expenditures, constructing

magnificent buildings, great institutions, expansive cities, lofty monuments, and rewarding delegations of nobles and tribal leaders” (Matar, 1995, p. 54).

The Fourth Stage: Contentment, Conciliation, and Imitation of Predecessors

At this point, kingship enters a stage of weakening and decline. Ibn Khaldun calls this the stage of contentment and conciliation, in which the ruler becomes satisfied with preserving what his predecessors established. He imitates earlier rulers and follows their example without introducing renewal or reform.

The Fifth Stage: Extravagance and Dissipation

This is the final stage, which Ibn Khaldun describes as the stage of wastefulness and extravagance. In this phase, the ruler squanders the wealth accumulated by earlier generations in pursuit of pleasures and desires. It is at this stage that the state acquires the characteristics of senility and becomes afflicted with a chronic illness from which it cannot recover, until it ultimately disappears altogether.

Ibn Khaldun also establishes a close relationship between economic stability and political stability, emphasizing that economic decline inevitably leads to political decline. He explains that at the beginning of a state, life remains simple and needs are limited because luxury has not yet spread. Consequently, taxation is moderate and sufficient to meet expenditures. However, as luxury and military expenditures increase, the state incurs enormous costs while spending less on productive resources. Production then declines because of excessive taxation and monopolistic practices, leading markets to stagnate.

He therefore argues that low taxation benefits civilization and prosperity, since people expand their commercial activities when they realize that the state does not burden them with oppressive taxes. Toward the end of the state, however, taxes increase because the rulers become immersed in luxury and require larger revenues. At the same time, the state weakens and becomes unable to collect taxes effectively, which reduces overall revenues. By contrast, in the early stages of the state, taxes are light upon individuals yet abundant in total revenue, because the state is still strong and capable of collecting taxes efficiently while requiring only limited expenditures.

Ibn Khaldun’s interest in economic phenomena and their relation to politics appears throughout much of the fifth section of the *Muqaddimah*. He examines the means of production, various crafts and industries, and their role in the formation and development of societies. Agriculture, in his view, represents the simplest and most fundamental form of production upon which human civilization depends. Yet the expansion of human civilization also requires the growth of commerce and industries that provide urban populations with the comforts and luxuries of city life.

Since the ultimate purpose of politics is to achieve the highest good for human beings in both this world and the hereafter, Ibn Khaldun distinguishes between two forms of political rule. The first is a form of government directed toward the welfare of subjects in both worldly and spiritual life; this is the religious policy (*siyāsa shar‘iyyah*) founded upon divine law (*sharī‘ah*). The second is a form of rule directed either toward the welfare of subjects or rulers solely in worldly affairs; this is a rational and secular politics derived from reason without recourse to divine revelation, which he calls kingship (*mulk*).

In this regard, he states: “Human social organization is necessary, and this is the meaning of civilization (*‘umrān*) about which we have spoken. Human beings

inevitably require within society a restraining ruler to whom they may refer. Sometimes his authority is based upon divine law revealed by God, compelling obedience through faith in the reward and punishment conveyed by its messenger. At other times, authority is based upon rational politics, compelling obedience through what people expect from the ruler once he understands their interests. The first brings benefit in both this world and the hereafter... whereas the second brings benefit only in this world. Rational politics itself may take two forms, one of which takes into account the public interest in general and the ruler's interest in preserving his kingdom in particular; such was the politics of the Persians."

Religious politics, therefore, derives its legitimacy from divine revelation and prophetic legislation, since the ruler in this case is either the Prophet himself or his successor. The purpose here is not merely the welfare of rulers or subjects in worldly life, but also the attainment of happiness in the hereafter. Consequently, governance aims simultaneously at the rectitude of both religion and worldly affairs.

The Qualifications of the Ruler

In light of the foregoing, Ibn Khaldun devoted considerable attention to defining the qualities required of the caliph, who represents the legitimate ruler whose authority is founded upon consensus. In this regard, he states: "The conditions required for this office are four: knowledge, justice, competence, and soundness of the senses and limbs. Scholars have differed concerning a fifth condition, namely Qurayshite lineage."

As for the requirement of knowledge, it is self-evident because the ruler must implement the commandments of God, and this is impossible without proper knowledge of them. Justice is equally necessary because the caliphate is a religious office, and justice is a condition required in all other offices as well. Competence means that the ruler must possess courage in enforcing legal punishments, engaging in warfare, and leading people effectively, while also possessing knowledge of *'asabiyyah* (group solidarity). As for soundness of the senses and limbs, this excludes impairments such as insanity, blindness, deafness, or muteness.

Regarding the condition that the caliph should belong to the Quraysh tribe, Ibn Khaldun argues that this requirement applied primarily to the early Islamic periods because competence and effective authority at that time were found only among those possessing Qurayshite *'asabiyyah*.

In summary, Ibn Khaldun viewed religion and the *sharī'ah* as forces capable of directing and organizing social life. This system was embodied most perfectly in the rule of the Rightly Guided Caliphs, where spiritual and temporal authority were united. Religion, although powerful, nevertheless requires force to sustain and protect it. He supports this view with the Prophetic tradition: "God never sent a prophet except among a people possessing strength and protection."

Unlike many philosophers who turned toward the ideal conception of the virtuous city and speculated about what political life ought to be, Ibn Khaldun was primarily concerned with studying the actual forms of government as they existed in history. Applying this method to Islamic history, he concluded that government according to the *sharī'ah*, or ideal rule, was realized only under the Rightly Guided Caliphs. Thereafter, various mixed forms of government emerged. He therefore devoted a separate discussion to the transformation of the caliphate into kingship under the **Umayyad** and **Abbasid** rulers. In this regard, he states: "The institution and traces of

the caliphate disappeared with the decline of Arab *'asabiyyah*, the extinction of their generation, and the dissolution of their conditions, leaving behind pure kingship, just as had been the case among the non-Arab monarchs.”

It thus becomes evident that when Ibn Khaldun addressed political philosophy and its objectives, he never neglected the ends prescribed by the *sharī'ah*. Yet, in order to realize these ends, the statesman must also possess another kind of knowledge that enables him to understand the concrete historical and social conditions through which these goals may actually be achieved. For this reason, Ibn Khaldun turned toward the study of history. Prior to his time, however, historical and social inquiry had largely remained at the level of fragmented narratives incapable of attaining the certainty associated with scientific knowledge. For the first time, Ibn Khaldun succeeded in applying a scientific method to these fields, turning away from mythical explanations incompatible with observation and reality. In doing so, he became one of the first thinkers to apply scientific reasoning to the human sciences.

When he examined the phenomena of civilization (*'umrān*), he found them to be subject to change and development rather than fixed permanence or uniformity. Likewise, he did not conceive history merely as the narration of the lives and achievements of kings; rather, he regarded it as an inquiry into society, civilization, and the causes influencing social phenomena and historical events. He was among the first to highlight the importance of economic factors in historical and social development, thereby conferring renewed scientific value upon the study of history.

For this reason, some historians have argued that Ibn Khaldun came close to formulating a theory of historical determinism, since he emphasized the close interconnection among phenomena according to objective and stable laws centuries before **Montesquieu** and **Vico**. In this regard, he states: “I introduce general causes into the study of particular events, and thus I understand the history of the human race within a comprehensive framework. I search for the causes and origins of political events.”

Among the sciences known to him, whether religious or rational, Ibn Khaldun perceived the foundations of a new science that he termed the science of human civilization (*'ilm al-'umrān*). He recognized that certain aspects of this science had been touched upon indirectly by politics, jurisprudence, and rhetoric, though only incidentally. Politics concerns the organization of society toward a particular goal; rhetoric seeks to persuade the public to accept or reject a given opinion; jurisprudence applies the rules of the *sharī'ah*. Ibn Khaldun realized, however, that in studying the nature of human civilization and its causes, he was in fact establishing a new science of major significance for political thought.

The Greeks, according to him, had failed to arrive at such a science because they always evaluated knowledge according to its final purpose and practical utility. Yet this science, in reality, serves primarily as an instrument for examining phenomena as they truly are, rather than for prescribing normative ideals. The science of *'umrān* thus expanded to encompass both the study of contemporary societies and the study of human life throughout history. It investigated the effects of internal and natural conditions upon social life, as well as primitive forms of social existence and the development of societies.

Hence, it has often been argued that the French philosopher Auguste Comte was not the first thinker to speak of sociology, for Ibn Khaldun had preceded him by four centuries

when he examined the conditions of human society. He studied these conditions not in order to prescribe what society ought to be, but rather to uncover the laws governing it. His approach was therefore analytical and scientific rather than normative.

He clarifies the methodology of this science, which he called the science of *'umrān*, in the following terms: “As for reports concerning events, their truth and validity require correspondence with reality. Therefore, it is necessary to examine the possibility of their occurrence, and this becomes the most important criterion... The rule for distinguishing truth from falsehood in reports through the criteria of possibility and impossibility is to examine human social organization, which is civilization (*'umrān*), and to distinguish what necessarily belongs to it by its nature, what is merely accidental, and what cannot possibly occur within it. Once we do so, we possess a law by which truth may be distinguished from falsehood and authenticity from fabrication through demonstrative proof that admits no doubt. Then, whenever we hear of events relating to civilization, we know what deserves acceptance and what deserves rejection. This becomes a sound standard through which historians may pursue truth and correctness in what they report. This is the purpose of the first book of our work. This science is independent in itself, for it possesses a subject matter, namely human civilization and social organization, and its issues consist in explaining the conditions and phenomena that affect them one after another. Such is the case with every science, whether rational or transmitted. Know also that discourse on this subject is an innovation, remarkable in method and of immense benefit, discovered through deep inquiry and investigation. It does not belong to rhetoric, which consists of persuasive discourse intended to incline the public toward or away from an opinion; nor does it belong to political science, for political science concerns the governance of the household or the city according to the requirements of ethics and wisdom.” He further adds: “To my knowledge, I have not encountered anyone among humankind who has spoken about this subject in this manner. I do not know whether this was due to their neglect of it—though such is unlikely—or whether they wrote about it and their works simply did not reach us. The sciences are many, the wise men among human nations are numerous, and what has not reached us of knowledge is greater than what has.” (Khaldun, 2000, p. 35).

Despite the merits generally attributed to Ibn Khaldun’s political philosophy, several criticisms have been directed against it. Among the most significant is that the material from which he derived his laws was limited to what he had observed in the lives of the Arabs and Berbers. The model that inspired his theory was largely drawn from the ruling states of North Africa and al-Andalus, particularly the regimes of the **Almoravids** and the **Almohads**, which had been established upon the strength of Berber tribes that transitioned from rural and pastoral nomadic life to the conditions of urban civilization. Nevertheless, Ibn Khaldun remains, in reality, a unique phenomenon within his age, for he lived during the fourteenth century, a period considerably later than the age of the Arab-Islamic intellectual and civilizational flourishing that had extended roughly from the eighth to the twelfth centuries (Matar, 1995, p. 51).

Although Ibn Khaldun’s cyclical theory of the succession of civilizations is characterized by objectivity and realism, it has not escaped criticism. His conception of the evolution of society and its historical transformations was fundamentally grounded in the reality he personally experienced and in the conditions of his own era. Consequently, he formulated a contemplative theory, even if it was rooted in objective

observation, because what may be valid for a particular historical reality cannot necessarily be generalized to all social and historical phenomena.

The philosophical dimension of Ibn Khaldun's theory lies in his interpretation of the movement of society and the state through a reflective and inductive reading of historical change and transformation. His perspective suggests that society and the state, once they enter a phase of decline, become subject to change, movement, and becoming, upon which the theory of cyclical succession is based. Yet this raises an important question: how can one explain the prolonged period of decline that followed the age of Ibn Khaldun and has continued into the present historical condition of the Arab and Islamic world? Does this not suggest that, despite its realism and objectivity, Ibn Khaldun's theory ultimately remains, to some extent, an abstract and contemplative construction?

Conclusion

The political and social philosophy of Ibn Khaldun constitutes one of the earliest and most original attempts to establish a scientific understanding of society, the state, and history. Through his theory of *'umrān* (human civilization), he sought to explain the emergence, development, and decline of societies according to objective laws grounded in observation, historical analysis, and the study of social realities rather than in purely speculative or idealistic thought. His concepts of *'asabiyyah*, cyclical historical development, and the interrelation between political authority, economic conditions, and social organization reveal a remarkably comprehensive vision of historical dynamics.

Unlike many earlier philosophers who focused on the ideal state and normative political models, Ibn Khaldun concentrated on the actual functioning of societies and governments as they unfolded throughout history. In doing so, he introduced a methodological approach that combined realism, causal analysis, and critical examination of historical reports. This enabled him to transcend mere narrative historiography and lay the foundations for what later came to be recognized as sociology and the philosophy of history.

At the same time, his theory remains closely connected to the historical and geographical conditions of the Arab and Berber societies he observed in North Africa and al-Andalus. For this reason, some aspects of his cyclical interpretation of civilizations may appear limited when applied universally to all historical experiences. Nevertheless, the enduring value of his thought lies not only in the specific conclusions he reached, but also in the scientific spirit and analytical method he introduced into the study of society and history.

Thus, Ibn Khaldun occupies a distinguished position in the history of political and social thought. His reflections on the rise and fall of states, the role of social solidarity, and the influence of economic and political factors on civilization continue to inspire contemporary discussions in sociology, political science, historiography, and philosophy. His work therefore remains a foundational contribution to the human sciences and a major intellectual achievement in both Islamic and universal thought.

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