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A Critical Reappraisal of Historical Evolution from the Perspective of Davari Ardakani, with an Emphasis on the Idea of Historical Ruptures

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ABSTRACT

The idea of historical evolution is a fundamental component of modern thought. It construes human history as a linear, continuous, and progressive process, with modern science and technology as the culmination of this trajectory. Originating in Enlightenment rationality and modern philosophies of history, this conception has gradually assumed the status of a dominant, ostensibly universal narrative. This study examines the philosophical foundations of the idea of historical progress and analyzes Reza Davari Ardakani's critique of it. Drawing on an analytical–interpretive approach and focusing on Davari Ardakani's works, it argues that, in his view, the evolutionist narrative of history is neither an objective truth nor a transcendent reality; rather, it is a construct of modern rationality closely bound up with the idea of human self-foundation. Within this framework, history is reduced to a coercive, predetermined course, while fundamental ruptures, the plurality of historical worlds, and alternative possibilities of being are marginalized. Through the concepts of historical rupture and the cyclical character of history, Davari Ardakani challenges linear, evolutionist accounts, presenting human history not as the continuation of a single trajectory but as the emergence and decline of distinct worlds of meaning. The findings suggest that his critique is not intended to reject modernity or its achievements, but to foster an authentic historical self-awareness that enables a conscious, critical, and responsible engagement with the modern world. From this perspective, critiquing the idea of historical progress is a prerequisite for opening new horizons for understanding the present and considering future possibilities in societies such as Iran.

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Introduction

In modern thought, history is often conceived as a linear process oriented toward perfection: a gradual movement from primitive stages toward a more advanced condition, driven by necessity and inevitability. Rooted in the Enlightenment, this conception later became one of the foundations of modern philosophy of history. Within this framework, theories such as Comte's law of three stages exemplify an evolutionist account that regards science and empirical rationality as the universal culmination of human history.

As this outlook became entrenched, history came to be understood as a law-governed trajectory directed toward the ends of science and modern order, rather than as a field of diverse possibilities. Consequently, historical and cultural experiences came to be measured against a single model, while other historical formations were regarded as primitive or peripheral stages. Historical evolution, therefore, is not merely a theory about the past; it has become a dominant ideology for understanding the past, the present, and the future.

This conception of history has been criticized and reconsidered by numerous thinkers in recent decades. Among Muslim intellectuals, Reza Davari Ardakani holds a prominent place in this critique. Davari views evolutionist historicism not as an "objective" and transhistorical truth, but as a "historical construct" that emerged within the rationality of modernity and came to constitute the dominant horizon of contemporary thought. In his view, human history has never been linear or uniform; rather, it has undergone fundamental ruptures, turns, and transformations that have altered the course and meaning of human life without entirely severing its connection to the past (Davari Ardakani, 2021, pp. 7–8).

The central problem addressed in this study is to examine the philosophical foundations of the idea of "historical evolution" and to explain Davari Ardakani's critique of it. The article shows that, by introducing concepts such as historical rupture and the periodicity of history, Davari challenges the linear, evolutionist narrative and regards it as a contingent phenomenon tied to the horizon of modernity. Accordingly, the study aims to analyze the foundations of evolutionist historicism and to revisit Davari's critique, focusing on concepts such as rupture, historical entrustment (ḥavālat)[1], and historical self-consciousness.

The central question of this article is: What philosophical foundations underpin evolutionist historicism, and how does Davari Ardakani, through the concept of "historical rupture," demonstrate its contingency and historical situatedness? The significance of this inquiry lies in its contribution to understanding his critique of modernity and in opening up a new perspective for analyzing the historical condition of societies that, in their encounter with the modern world, oscillate between imitation, rejection, and theoretical disorientation.

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[1] . The non-conscious entrusting of people to a historical epoch that they inhabit and live through without fully recognizing it.

Literature Review

Neglecting previous scholarship would leave the article's central question only partially addressed. Accordingly, this section reviews the most relevant studies. In their study entitled "The Philosophy of History from the Perspective of Reza Davari Ardakani" (Ahmadi and Miri, 2025), Ahmadi and Miri argue that Davari Ardakani's philosophy of history, influenced by Heidegger, understands history not as continuous but as a succession of discrete worlds. From this perspective, "Westoxication" has produced an existential rupture in the Iranian subject, turning the past into a museum-like object and leaving the subject afflicted with the "pain of being without history." In a condition exacerbated by technology, the philosophy of history is concerned not with laws governing historical development, but with reflecting on this rupture and questioning the possibility of thought and the human condition.

Rahmanian's study, "World History and the Globalization of History" (Rahmanian, 2006), argues that contemporary globalization and globalism cannot be properly understood without examining and understanding their historical roots and antecedents, including the origins and background of the concept of "world history," or "the history of a single humanity."

Tavana's article, "Islam and the Theory of the End of History" (Tavana, 2011), identifies two broad perspectives in Western political and social philosophy. The first is an evolutionist and teleological view of history, which regards the historical process as one of progress and improvement; the second is the anti-evolutionist view, which sees human history as moving toward decline. Using qualitative content analysis, the article challenges Fukuyama's theory of the end of history from the perspective of one of the most prominent Islamic evolutionist perspectives, namely the Shi'i doctrine of Mahdism. It concludes by proposing an alternative framework: the theory of the global sovereignty of Islam.

Amiri's article, "The Metaphysics of Science and the Impasse of Development in Davari's Thought" (Amiri Tehrani, 2023), seeks a solution to the impasse of development from Davari's perspective. It first identifies, from his writings, the characteristics of development and the conditions for participation in science. It then employs an analytical method and, drawing on Davari's view that a middle way is possible in relation to the human sciences, uses concepts from the philosophy of science to propose a way of overcoming this impasse.

The article by Emamjomehzadeh and Rouhani, "An Analysis of the Philosophical Foundations of the West in the Epistemic Framework of Reza Davari Ardakani" (Emamjomehzadeh and Rouhani, 2011), argues that Davari's critique of modernity targets anthropocentrism (humanism) and, in doing so, also challenges modern rationality and science. In his view, postmodernism is not a continuation of modernity, but rather its crisis phase. Accordingly, liberation from Western thought is possible only by setting aside subjectivism and Western ideologies. The article seeks to offer a philosophical reassessment of Davari's thought on the West.

This article differs from previous studies in focusing on the critique of "historical evolution" as an ideological construct within the culture of modernity, a subject that has received relatively little attention in the existing literature. It seeks to clarify, within Davari Ardakani's intellectual horizon,

the relationship between rejecting the evolutionist narrative and the possibility of "historical self-consciousness" as a condition for authentic reflection on the future.

Research Method and Stages

This study adopts a qualitative approach and an analytical-interpretive method, which, given the philosophical nature of the problem, enables an examination of its conceptual layers and theoretical presuppositions. Data were collected through library research and comprise Davari Ardakani's works as primary sources, and texts on the philosophy of history and theories of historical evolution as secondary sources.

The analysis proceeds in three stages. First, the theoretical formulation of the idea of "historical evolution" and its foundations in modern thought are examined. Second, this idea is critiqued through the framework of Davari Ardakani's thought. Third, on the basis of these findings, a way of moving beyond its dominance is outlined.

Historical Evolutionism in Enlightenment Thought: Its Nature and Philosophical Foundations

Before undertaking a philosophical discussion of historical evolutionism, two broad theories concerning the fate of human civilization must be distinguished: the theory of historical evolution (a teleological theory) and the cyclical theory. The evolutionist approach views science as a driving force in a comprehensive historical process. This perspective took shape after the French Revolution, during the period of reconstruction. Bourgeois Enlightenment thought maintained that society could be deliberately designed, and that science and thought could serve as instruments for realizing this social blueprint. Although the bourgeoisie had not yet achieved full political power at the time, its worldview, together with the process of industrialization, lent force to the idea that time unfolds in distinct stages. The idea gained such widespread acceptance that it seemed to offer a definitive answer to the course of history (Knoblauch, 2011, p. 47).

In the classical literature on the philosophy of history, these two broad models of historical interpretation can be traced in the thought of thinkers such as Hegel, Comte, and, to some extent, Collingwood. Through his dialectical interpretation of the movement of Spirit, Hegel understands history as a process advancing toward the perfection of reason and freedom. Comte, in turn, formulates the transition from the theological to the metaphysical and then to the positive stage in his law of three stages, while Collingwood emphasizes the historicity of self-consciousness and the role of historical thought in human self-understanding. As Löwith has shown, the concept of "progress" gradually becomes the core of the modern philosophy of history within this tradition, making possible a meaningful experience of the functions of human reason. From this perspective, Reza Davari Ardakani's critique of historical evolutionism can be understood in relation to this same progress-oriented tradition: it questions the very assumption that history is a necessary, linear movement toward improvement.

As Cassirer argues, the modern philosophy of history begins with Descartes' principle of the cogito. This beginning is not the product of historical development, but the outcome of a free, self-

grounding decision of the mind. In a revolutionary and deliberate act, the mind leaves the past behind and embarks on a new path of self-reflective thought. This change is not gradual; it is a radical transformation in the mode of thinking (Cassirer, 2009, p. 195). In this account, the self-grounding subject, by disregarding the divine, conceives of history as an evolutionary trajectory culminating in subjectivism, understood as human perfection.

The idea of "historical evolution" can therefore be understood as one of the most prominent outcomes of this self-grounding. From Descartes, who, through the cogito, placed the human being at the center of the world as an independent knowing subject, to Bacon, who recast the conception of science as an instrument for "mastering nature," and then to Comte, Hegel, and Spencer, each of whom in his own way portrayed this trajectory as necessary, linear, and oriented toward perfection, all are, in effect, different branches and manifestations of the same fundamental principle: "human self-grounding." What distinguishes this perspective from a theological one is that history is no longer understood as a predetermined fate or divine plan, but as a "human project" designed and advanced by the modern subject. The following section provides further discussion of this central point.

Descartes and Human Self-Grounding

The most fundamental philosophical transformation that paved the way for the emergence of the idea of historical evolution was the break with the traditional worldview and the birth of the self-grounding subject. In Descartes' philosophy, the principle "I think, therefore I am" places the human being at the center of the world as an independent, self-conscious subject capable of attaining certain knowledge of the world by relying on reason. "As long as I think, I exist. Even if a great deceiver is constantly deceiving me, I must still exist in order to be deceived. Thus, whenever I say 'I am' or conceive of it, this is necessarily true" (Descartes, 2012, p. 34).

Human self-grounding (subjectivism) was a necessary condition for history to be understood as a rational human project, one in which humanity, through its will and reason, could pave the way for progress. Modernity thus began with the assumption that the human being (the subject) is an independent and rational entity at the center of the world, capable of mastering and harnessing nature (the object) through reason and science. This outlook formed the principal intellectual foundation of modern technology (Ahmadi, 2011, p. 229).

Bacon and Science as an Instrument for Mastering Nature

Francis Bacon, for his part, shifted the aim of science from theoretical knowledge to the practical mastery of nature with the maxim "knowledge is power." Bacon rejects the idea that human beings possess innate reason, dismissing it, along with theoretical arguments, unverified hypotheses, and the philosophical systems of the past, as unreliable (Bacon, 1980, Aphorism 115, p. 105). He defined science as an instrument for improving material conditions, grounded in empirical observation, and construed history's goal in terms of technological progress and worldly prosperity. In doing so, he laid the epistemic foundations for the will to mastery, which would later become the driving force behind the evolutionist narrative of history.

This architectonic spirit and desire for absolute mastery were present in modern thought from the outset. Bacon, for instance, spoke of a future in which humanity would rule over all things: "The age is still young. Give us a few more centuries, and we shall master everything and rebuild everything" (Durant, 1951, p. 142).

Kant and the Evolution of History

Realizing the ideal of mastering nature required a transformation in the theory of knowledge, which Kant brought about through his "Copernican Revolution." He reversed the traditional relationship between subject and object, writing: "Hitherto it has been assumed that all our cognition must conform to the objects; but all attempts to extend our cognition of objects by establishing something about them a priori through concepts have, on this assumption, come to nothing. Let us therefore try whether we may not make better progress with the problems of metaphysics by assuming that the objects must conform to our cognition" (Kant, 2022, p. 48). Put more plainly, "the human mind does not merely reflect the external world; it also plays a major role in constituting cognition, and it is the human subject that gives form and order to external data" (Mojtahedi, 2011, p. 22). This principle, described as "the understanding's dominion over objects" or "objective cognition," became a cornerstone of modern science and of the modern world's logic of domination.

By conceiving of history as a necessary path toward the realization of practical reason, Kant lent philosophical legitimacy to evolutionism. In his view, humanity necessarily and universally advances from darkness to enlightenment. This outlook cast history as a linear, deterministic, and teleological process led by Western civilization. As Mojtahedi puts it, "humanity was driven out of Eden, that is from the original state intended for the human species by reason, yet it has advanced from animality to humanity, moving beyond instinct and acquiring human qualities" (Mojtahedi, 2009, pp. 262–263).

Turgot and the Idea of Progress

Before turning to Turgot, the "doctrine of progress" may be identified as a systematic formulation of this progress-oriented conception of history. Within this doctrine, history is understood as a linear, forward-moving process in which humanity advances from primitive and "lower" stages to more "advanced" and rational ones. Reason and science drive this movement, while the self-grounding human subject, by designing social institutions and applying knowledge, is held responsible for accelerating the historical process. Thus, the principle of progress provides not only a description of the past but also a norm for the future and a standard by which societies and cultures are assessed. This conception forms the principal theoretical context for the discussion of Turgot and Condorcet, as well as one of the central targets of Davari Ardakani's critique of historical evolutionism.

Enlightenment thinkers viewed history as linear and progressive. Turgot was among the most prominent Enlightenment thinkers to depict history as a linear, evolutionary movement. In his view, the principle of progress governs the whole of history, and humanity passes through three stages:

the theological, the metaphysical, and the positive, the last oriented toward science. Turgot was the first to conceive of history as a progressive process and emphasized that human beings should strive to shape history by accepting responsibility in this world, rather than in the next (Knoblauch, 2011, p. 54).

This linear conception of history should, in fact, be understood in the context of the formation of the "idea of progress" in modern thought. In his historical study of the concept, Sidney Pollard shows that, from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries onward, belief in humanity's gradual and continuous progress became one of the fundamental assumptions of European culture and thought. According to this assumption, human history is understood as a cumulative process of improvement, with scientific, technological, and social achievements regarded as signs of gradual movement toward better conditions. In this way, the idea of progress gradually moved beyond the realm of philosophical debate and became a dominant framework for interpreting historical and social change in the modern world, providing the theoretical basis for many theories of historical evolution (Pollard, 1968).

Condorcet and the Progress of the Human Mind

Another prominent Enlightenment thinker was Marquis de Condorcet, whose influence came to exceed Turgot's. His book was published in 1793, at the height of the French Revolution. Condorcet held that the human mind progresses, and that this progress is driven by the growth of knowledge and the advancement of the sciences. In turn, the progress of the human mind affects the growth of knowledge and the advancement of science. The development of knowledge, the advancement of science, and the progress of the human mind are therefore different aspects of a single movement. Condorcet argued that scientific progress advances education, while educational progress, in turn, leads to further scientific progress. This reciprocal influence between science and education is one of the most effective and powerful causes of human development (Condorcet, 1973, p. 85). Condorcet systematically charted this trajectory as ten necessary stages, beginning with the "savage and primitive" and culminating in the "highest degree of perfection" (Brinton, 2011, pp. 265–269).

Hegel: Dialectical Rationality and the Necessity of History

A defining feature of Hegel's philosophy of history is its conception of the actualization of Spirit as a linear, ascending, and progressive process. Each society has its own distinctive spirit of the age, which guides its intellectual developments. History moves toward the gradual realization of reason and logic. This movement, from within to without and from imagination to rational thought, unfolds across world history, enabling enlightened humanity to attain rational self-consciousness and to establish states and laws (Hegel, 1955).

For Hegel, history is a necessary, rational, and teleological process: the stage on which Absolute Spirit is gradually realized in time. Through dialectical movement, each stage passes beyond its contradictions into a higher one. The ultimate end of this process is progress toward the realization

of human rational freedom. This view interprets history as a narrative of reason's triumph and regards modern Western civilization as the culmination of this evolutionary trajectory.

Auguste Comte: Scientism and Historical Evolution

As the founder of positivism, Comte offered a systematic account of historical evolution through his law of the three stages. The human mind and society necessarily pass through three stages. In the theological stage, phenomena are explained by appeal to supernatural beings; in the metaphysical stage, explanations invoke abstract forces; and, in the final, positive stage, the mind seeks the invariable relations of succession and resemblance among phenomena (Tan, 2018, pp. 32–33).

Marx and Historical Materialism

Karl Marx, too, developed a broad account of history. Although he rejected some of Hegel's ideas, he retained its basic framework. Hegel held that human spirit plays a role in shaping historical change, and that social transformation reflects the continued development of the human spirit. Marx's thought differed from Hegel's, however, in its interpretation of materialism, which formed the central premise of his sociology. For Marx, an idea is nothing other than matter undergoing change and transformation (Knoblauch, 2011, p. 64).

Marx's conception of historical evolution included the view that "the stages of development from barbarism to civil society were an inheritance of the Enlightenment. Even Marx's understanding of history since antiquity was shaped entirely by the experience of world-historical change, combining a global outlook with a distinctive Orientalist perspective on the origins of rational capitalism" (Turner, 2005, p. 238).

Herbert Spencer: The Naturalization of History and Progress

By extending the theory of evolution to society, Herbert Spencer treated humanity's linear and inevitable progress toward perfection as a law of nature. In contrast with the Christian doctrine of the Fall, this view portrayed human beings as ascending toward a higher condition and, underpinned by scientific advances, fostered widespread optimism about humanity's earthly future (Horden, 1989, pp. 31–32).

Spencer extended evolutionary theory to the social sciences and advanced the concept of "survival of the fittest," according to which societies evolve from simple to complex forms through natural competition. This view construed differences among societies not as cultural but as evolutionary and natural, turned historical development into a deterministic law, and justified Western colonial domination as a legitimate consequence of the "law of evolution."

Summary of These Views

The theory of historical evolution became an ideology of progress that, like a secular religion, replaced otherworldly aspirations with faith in an earthly future, elevated science and technology to the status of divinities, and interpreted economic development as a sign of worldly salvation.

This deterministic narrative both legitimized Western domination and propelled modernization around the world. As Harry Emerson Fosdick put it, humanity no longer wished to die and go to heaven; it wanted to live for a hundred years and witness the results of human ingenuity (Horden, 1989, pp. 31–32).

These theoretical premises thus produced a framework that has continued to shape historical thought in various forms. Its key propositions may be summarized as follows:

- History follows a linear, necessary, and forward-moving course.
- This course has a direction: it moves toward rational and material perfection.
- Modern Western civilization represents the highest stage of this historical trajectory.
- Science and technology provide objective criteria for measuring progress.
- Cultural differences are, in effect, differences in historical position: some societies occupy earlier stages of this universal trajectory.

This is the very framework that Davari Ardakani challenges by invoking the concept of "historical rupture," treating it as a construct specific to the modern era.

A Critical Reading of Historical Evolution in the Thought of Reza Davari Ardakani

In Davari's view, historical evolutionism is a construct within the framework of modern rationality. Once established as a dominant discourse, it imposes the Western model of linear progress on all societies as a universal destiny. At the heart of this narrative lies the assumption that "the requirement of evolution and historical development is that things and circumstances should initially be imperfect and insignificant, and gradually acquire determination, distinctiveness, and perfection" (Davari Ardakani, 2021, p. 87).

For Davari, "this narrative reduces history to a linear, inevitable, and evolutionary path whose end is 'modern civilization,' regarded as the culmination and ultimate standard of judgment. This view is even formulated in the guise of scientific theories: history is divided into 'pre-logical' and 'logical' periods, with the West cast as the final representative of the 'age of logic' and as the perfected form of human life" (Davari Ardakani, 2007, p. 19). From this perspective, earlier historical stages are deemed deficient in comparison with the modern end-point and destined to disappear; their repudiation is therefore treated as necessary. Recognition of this "historical determinism" becomes an absolute principle, rendering any doubt illegitimate and presenting modern principles as universal and beyond question, despite their lack of historical rootedness (Davari Ardakani, 2021, p. 144).

The linear conception of history and the subject oriented toward domination have their roots in a deeper transformation in the sphere of thought. From the Renaissance onward, "human beings affirmed the worldly and historical dimension of their existence—which had been forgotten in the Middle Ages—in such a way that the spiritual and sacred dimension became subordinate to the former" (Davari Ardakani, 2010a, p. 62). In this new "world of illusion," "universal reason is

nullified or brought into the service of the understanding (which is nothing other than wahm in the true sense of the word)" (Davari Ardakani, 2011, p. 97).

The result of this transformation was the emergence of a "human being" who, "through will, reason, and knowledge, brings nature into conformity with himself and makes it his own" (Nahri, 2025, p. 53). As a self-grounding "subject," the human being came to place himself at the center of, and make himself the measure of, all things. This transformation exemplifies Martin Heidegger's definition of modernity: "The age which we call modern is defined by the fact that man becomes the center and measure of all beings" (Heidegger, 1991, p. 28).

Consequences of the Linear, Evolutionary Narrative of History: Domination, Erasure, and the Assimilation of the Other

In Davari's view, this conception is a dominant narrative that imposes itself on all societies as their inevitable destiny. To establish its own existential necessity, modernity recasts all prior history as a prelude to its emergence. "Claiming absolute universality, the modern world order recognizes no 'other', including the East, and seeks to negate or absorb it, rather than engage in dialogue. The essence of this project is the suppression or appropriation of the other" (Davari Ardakani, 2021, pp. 143–144).

This narrative ignores whatever does not fit within the framework of modernity, including non-European cultures, or interprets it as an incomplete stage on the way to realizing the Western model. Within this framework, modernity is treated not merely as a historical period but as the inevitable destiny of all societies, thereby marginalizing the possibility of conceiving of different historical trajectories. The result is a human being who regards himself as the center of the world and adopts a domineering stance toward the "other," whether nature or other cultures. Past peoples, accordingly, are understood not as distinct historical traditions but as unfinished stages in the evolution of modern humanity.

Even religion has not escaped this redefinition. "In modernity, the relationship between human beings and the world, other people, and the Origin has changed; whatever this relationship may be, it is no longer religious. Religion in this age has received a modern interpretation. Although they held religious beliefs, the founders of modern society during the Renaissance set religion aside in designing the new world. Yet, since religion could not simply be ignored, it had to be reconciled with modernity in order to preserve harmony in the new society" (Davari Ardakani, 2010b, p. 165).

Orientalism reveals the ideological function of this logic: it helps establish the premise that "history is Western history," while others are deemed "without history" and made objects of Orientalist study. On this basis, the history of humanity is narrated as culminating in modernity and its new rationality. In other words, no history exists apart from Western history, and it is here that the differences become apparent (Davari Ardakani, 2007, p. 86).

This process reflects the logic of excluding or assimilating the "other," a logic that stems from human self-grounding and the evolutionary narrative of history, and that has led to crises of identity and meaning in non-Western societies.

Consequences of the Linear Narrative of Historical Evolution: Intellectual Closure and Crisis

The narrative of historical evolution entails a form of intellectual closure and epistemic crisis that prevents inquiry into the nature of the present age's crisis. "Discussion of historical rupture is difficult because the dominant narrative equates history with the linear, continuous history of Western progress, moving toward perfection" (Davari Ardakani, 2021, pp. 23–24). In a climate where progress has become a metaphysical necessity, thought loses its depth and "gives way to a false optimism about a technological future. From this perspective, problems will resolve themselves through progress, and the main task is to preserve the system's principles and prevent doubt about them" (Davari Ardakani, 2021, pp. 23–24).

Davari argues that this modern optimism blinds people to the fundamental contradictions of the world: "Even politically opposed groups share a belief in a future that will be nothing more than a continuation of the existing order, while crises are ignored or treated as temporary" (Davari Ardakani, 2021, pp. 23–24). This shared commitment to preserving the existing order makes it difficult to acknowledge the end of an era or a change in history's direction. The belief in a "straightforward course of history," unprecedented before modernity, conceives of history as a necessary movement from imperfection to perfection and diminishes the perceived need for reflection. The principle of progress, specific to the modern world, is projected onto all of history, while such evident facts as the qualitative differences between historical periods are disregarded. For instance, the Middle Ages cannot be regarded as a "perfection" of ancient Greece (Davari Ardakani, 2021, pp. 80–81). Significantly, "even proponents of this theory are compelled to acknowledge fundamental ruptures, such as the transition from ancient Greece to the Middle Ages and then to the modern era—transitions that themselves attest to discontinuities in the course of history" (Davari Ardakani, 2021, pp. 27–28). Accordingly, the past should not be judged by modernity's standards. Ancient science and wisdom should not be treated as imperfect versions of modern science; rather, they should be understood as products of their own particular historical conditions and possibilities, valid and complete in relation to the worlds from which they emerged (Davari Ardakani, 2021, pp. 27–28).

Although the triumph of the modern order in Europe turned it into a global power, and its fundamental principles, progress and human self-grounding, came to be accepted across the world, this acceptance generated a profound crisis among peoples whose long-standing traditions stood in conflict with them. This incompatibility produced two responses: the unreflective adoption of modern rules under the outward guise of preserving ancient forms, or an excessive preoccupation with formal differences that ultimately led to the wholesale rejection of modernity (Davari Ardakani, 2023a, pp. 43–44). This crisis, however, arises from modernity's own nature. Modernity is neither an inevitable stage nor an abstract idea; it has been actualized through the emergence of "modern humanity", the self-grounding subject.

Davari Ardakani and the Way Beyond the Determinism of Historicism

From Davari Ardakani's perspective, moving beyond this situation requires recognizing that modernity is neither an inevitable stage in the linear evolution of history nor an abstract idea. Modernity has been actualized through the emergence of "modern humanity." It is an accomplished historical condition and an objective system, cultural, social, and economic, that is bound, in Hegelian terms, to "a form of human self-grounding"; the political and social existence of human beings has itself become an expression of this self-grounding (Davari Ardakani, 2007, p. 313). By developing the idea of acknowledging historical rupture, and by drawing attention to historical entrustment (ḥavālat) and historical self-consciousness, Davari Ardakani proposes a way beyond this situation.

Historical Rupture as a Counterpoint to Linear Evolutionism

In contrast to a linear and evolutionary view, Davari Ardakani focuses on the cyclical character of history and the ruptures between historical epochs. From his perspective, the idea of historical evolution distorts the complex reality of history by imposing a linear, one-directional model and disregarding other ways of thinking about time and transformation. The concept of historical rupture suggests that human history has not unfolded along a continuous path; rather, at turning points, its intellectual and social foundations have changed, giving it a new direction.

Nevertheless, a mindset unable to tolerate an understanding of "difference" prefers to interpret every change in terms of "evolution" and "progress toward perfection," seeing the present merely as a more advanced version of the past, rather than as something that has taken shape as fundamentally distinct and new (Davari Ardakani, 2021, pp. 7–8). For Davari Ardakani, "historical rupture" is a condition in which the principles of the past lose their validity and new principles come to guide action. This fundamental rupture in the transition to modernity was not the product of the Middle Ages' natural evolution, but resulted from a turning away from it and a deliberate return to Greece and Christianity in order to establish a new order founded on progress. Subsequently, however, Orientalism transformed this particular trajectory into "world history" and, by presenting it as a linear and inevitable narrative, erased or marginalized non-European civilizations. In this way, the concept of historical rupture lost its meaning, and history came to be represented in a one-directional framework as moving toward absolute perfection (Davari Ardakani, 2021, pp. 11–12).

Attention to the Epochs of History

From Davari Ardakani's perspective, the model of "cyclical history" stands in complete opposition to the linear view. In this conception, history is not a path from imperfection to perfection, but a succession of qualitatively distinct epochs, each grounded in its own principles and deriving its ultimate end from a transhistorical source. This model challenges the linear-evolutionary conception and opens new horizons for criticizing it. At the center of Davari Ardakani's cyclical view is the idea that history is not an earthly process aimed at exploiting nature; rather, it is "the history of the manifestation of truth: it begins on the day of creation and ends on

the Day of Judgment" (Davari Ardakani, 2012, p. 341). Within this broad conception, the end of history is sacred, and certain thinkers maintain that there are distinct "epochs" between its beginning and end. The clearest expression of this understanding can be found in Ibn ʿArabi's thought and in *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam*, which, in Davari Ardakani's words, presents "a form of sacred and esoteric history extending from the appearance of Adam to the epoch of the sealing of prophecy," since each bezel is devoted to a prophet as the manifestation of one of the Divine Names (Davari Ardakani, 2012, p. 341).

The mechanism of cyclical history is based on the "sovereignty of the Divine Names." Within this order, prophets are not merely messengers; they are also manifestations of particular Names of God. With the appearance of each prophet, the Name of which he is the manifestation becomes sovereign and guides the community (Davari Ardakani, 2012, p. 341). In this course of history, the Seal of the Prophets (peace be upon him) is "the manifestation of all the Divine Names." Accordingly, the structure of time and the meaning of events revolve not around material progress, but around the sovereignty of the Divine Names:

> *"As long as a Name is sovereign, everything takes place within the circle of the authority of that Name. Once the period of one Name's dominance comes to an end and another Name becomes sovereign, events acquire a different form and meaning."(Davari Ardakani, 2012, p. 341)*

History thus consists of distinct and qualitative epochs, each possessing its own logic, meaning, and end. In these epochs, "both repetition and transformation exist"; yet this transformation is not a linear movement toward an earthly perfection, but a rotation through different circuits of the manifestation of truth (Davari Ardakani, 2012, p. 341).

Davari Ardakani points out that the modern formulation of history has its roots in religious thought, although its character has been transformed:

> *"From the Renaissance onward, forms of an imagined polity appeared before modern humanity and were regarded as the end of history. With this conception, the idea of progress emerged in the eighteenth century, and history was reduced to merely linear history; humanity's past was then regarded as a prelude to, or a stage within, world history." (Davari Ardakani, 2012, pp. 341–342)*

The essence of this transformation, which is now taken for granted, is a narrative according to which "humanity was initially afflicted by illusions and myths and gradually … reached the age of science and reason; upon entering this stage, it established its domination over everything as an unquestionable fact" (Davari Ardakani, 2012, p. 342).

From Davari Ardakani's perspective, historical rupture is not a phenomenon unique to the modern age; it opens the way to identifying alternative historical formations. Nevertheless, "historical rupture appears undesirable because it emphasizes doubt about the dream of progress,

the stability of the existing order, and the possibility of changing the course of history" (Davari Ardakani, 2021, pp. 23–24). The denial of rupture by evolutionist thought is an attempt to present linear progress as eternal. Clear examples such as the Renaissance in Europe and the Islamic Revolution in Iran, however, demonstrate that history is neither linear nor coercively predetermined. Through fundamental transformations in thought and action, it can embark upon a new course (Davari Ardakani, 2021, pp. 23–24).

Attention to Historical Entrustment and Historical Self-Consciousness

From Davari Ardakani's perspective, the narrative of historical evolution has become a dominant manifestation of **historical entrustment (*ḥavālat*)** in the modern era. By claiming universality, it imposes itself as the inevitable destiny of all societies. He emphasizes that "historical entrustment has nothing to do with determinism or the principle of causality" (Davari Ardakani, 2017, p. 16).

For Davari Ardakani, historical entrustment concerns the differences among worlds and the conditions under which freedom is actualized. It is not an external force, but rather the way thought and action are realized within a particular world. Accordingly, "historical entrustment has not come from outside the essence of human beings; it is identical with our thought, speech, and action" (Davari Ardakani, 2017, p. 18). From this perspective, human beings are not trapped within historical entrustment by an external force; rather, their limitations arise from their own actions and habits. Being trapped within an entrustment result from inhabiting forms of thought and action that have become habitual. Thus:

> *"People who have turned away from thinking and surrendered themselves to their historical habits, which they call culture, have no recollection of the past and do not recognize the possibilities of the present and the future; they are trapped within historical entrustment."(Davari Ardakani, 2017, p. 17)*

Ordinarily, the entrustment of each historical epoch is specific to the people of that epoch. Today, however, with the globalization of the Western entrustment, this entrustment has become the destiny of all the peoples of the world. This particular entrustment is an "entrustment of worldlessness": the peoples of the earth have become, to varying degrees, worldless, and the concepts of "estrangement" and "alienation," which emerged in the eighteenth century, express precisely this condition (Davari Ardakani, 2017, p. 20). In this way, the evolutionist narrative of history becomes consolidated within this entrustment: it reduces history to an obvious and unavoidable path and marginalizes the possibility of historical recollection and thought.

He emphasizes the possibility of liberation from historical entrustment. Entrustment remains dominant only so long as no awareness of it has emerged: "Freedom begins when recollection and thought emerge, and possibilities, capacities, and incapacities become manifest" (Davari Ardakani, 2017, p. 22).

The way beyond evolutionist thought lies neither in denying history nor in submitting to its necessity, but in opening the horizon of historical self-consciousness. Such self-consciousness represents history once again as a field of human possibilities rather than as an inevitable and predetermined path.

Historical self-consciousness occupies a central place in Davari Ardakani's thought. It is not merely awareness of the past, but an understanding of one's historical situation within the context of the ruptures that have shaped the present world. This self-consciousness liberates human beings from the domination of prevailing narratives such as the ideology of linear evolution and makes possible a conscious relationship with the modern world.

Although modernity, through historical self-consciousness and self-grounding reason, directed attention toward the principle of progress, Löwith (1897–1973) maintains that the concept of progress constitutes the animating principle of the modern philosophy of history and enables a meaningful experience of the functions of human reason (Ahmadi, 2011, p. 19). Yet when this constructive historical self-consciousness was transferred to non-Western societies, it assumed a distorted and inauthentic form. The West "transformed the history of the world as a whole, in various ways and especially through Orientalism, into a prelude and introduction to Western history" (Davari Ardakani, 2012, pp. 344–345). The result was a narrative called the "history of self-consciousness":

> *"A history in which humanity recognizes itself in the past, sees the past as an imperfect stage of its present condition, and moves toward a future in which its existence reaches perfection." (Davari Ardakani, 2012, pp. 344–345)*

Many non-Western historians adopted an Orientalist perspective on history without "finding their own foothold in the present." The result was historical disorientation, because "when human beings have no place in history, do not know from where and how they have arrived here and now, and do not know where they are heading, they remain disoriented" (Davari Ardakani, 2012, pp. 344–345).

The consequence of this unconscious imitation was an abnormal and destructive rupture:

> *"People in whose existence authentic self-consciousness has not been actualized cannot properly pursue the path of development through information alone. Under such conditions, although historical ruptures sever ties with the past, they do not connect people to the future; instead, they give rise to further forms of dispersion." (Davari Ardakani, 2021, p. 71)*

This is the "rupture of underdevelopment," a major rupture in contemporary history that "is not preceded by thought or by the opening of a new horizon" (Davari Ardakani, 2021, p. 62).

The way beyond this impasse lies not in rejecting modernity, but in attaining authentic historical self-consciousness:

> *"An approach to modern science and the reason of modernity that is neither rhetorical nor imitative, but is undertaken together with an understanding of what we have been, what we are, and what we may become." (Davari Ardakani, 2021, pp. 136–137)*

This self-consciousness is also a fundamental condition of any genuine freedom, since "freedom is contingent upon and preceded by self-consciousness concerning the right to participate in determining one's own destiny and that of one's country" (Davari Ardakani, 2021, p. 172).

Historical Self-Consciousness in a Critical Encounter with the Domination of Technology

Nevertheless, the realization of this self-consciousness faces a serious challenge: the domination of technologies that claim to shape human thought and action. Information technology has thus become not merely an instrument at human beings' disposal, but a part of their lives that determines their direction (Davari Ardakani, 2021, pp. 205–206).

From this perspective, historical self-consciousness depends on "historical recollection", a recollection that does not entail a reactionary return to the past, but rather constitutes "liberation from the constraints of the present." This recollection is achieved through a "reverse historical movement" and a rereading of the foundations of modernity and of the period preceding it, by understanding its relationship with the Middle Ages and the encounter between Christianity and Greek thought. Its ultimate aim is to attain the "primordial epoch" and achieve a relative liberation from the domination of technology (Davari Ardakani, 2007, p. 228).

This consciousness-raising process constitutes the realization of "shared language," or authentic dialogue. In such dialogue, sharing a language with the other makes it possible to see, hear, discover, and act together with the other (Davari Ardakani, 2007, p. 29).

Building on his rupture-centered analysis of modernity and of the subject's logic of domination, Davari Ardakani criticizes three prevalent approaches to development in Iran: development as an inevitable stage, development as an alien phenomenon, and overcoming development through alternative movements. What these three approaches have in common is their neglect of the "ruptural" character of modernity and their inability to analyze the conditions under which their ideals could be realized. Consequently, they either lapse into blind imitation, turn toward wholesale and fruitless rejection, or evade an encounter with the reality of modern history through an idealized image of the future (Davari Ardakani, 2023b, pp. 354–355).

Conclusion

Focusing on the idea of "historical evolution," this study has shown that the concept, as formulated in modern thought, is not simply a neutral account of the course of history. Rather, it arises from an epistemic framework shaped within the particular historical context of modernity. The first part of the article demonstrated that the linear narrative of history, which conceives of its movement as one from imperfection to perfection and from simplicity to complexity, is closely connected to the self-grounding subject, instrumental rationality, and the will to domination. Within this narrative, modern science and technology become the ultimate measures of progress and the endpoint of human history.

The analysis in the second part showed that this conception of history has consequences beyond theory: in practice, it leads to the disregard of historical and cultural plurality. Within this framework, non-Western civilizations and cultures are either denied recognition altogether or interpreted as primitive and incomplete stages along a single path whose culmination is modern Western civilization. The result is a logic that seeks not to engage in dialogue with the "other," but to negate, absorb, or assimilate it. The effects of this logic can be seen in the modern human being's relationship with nature, the past, and even religion.

Against this dominant narrative, Reza Davari Ardakani's critique opens up a different horizon. What Davari Ardakani calls into question is not merely a theory of history, but the epistemological and ontological foundations of a world that understands history as linear, homogeneous, and inevitable. From his perspective, the idea of historical evolution is a construct bound to the horizon of modernity; by treating itself as absolute, it forecloses the possibility of understanding other historical epochs on their own terms. In contrast, Davari Ardakani's emphasis on "historical rupture" and the qualitative distinction between historical epochs presents history not as a continuous and coercive path, but as the emergence and decline of different worlds of meaning, each grounded in its own principles and to be understood in relation to its own historical horizon.

Accordingly, the central issue is neither the unqualified acceptance of modernity nor its wholesale rejection. Davari Ardakani proposes a third path, expressed in the concept of "historical self-consciousness." This means becoming aware of one's own historical situation, understanding the conditions that have brought the present world into being, and recognizing our relationship to that world. Without such awareness, an encounter with modernity is reduced either to superficial and unreflective imitation or to a reactive rejection lacking a theoretical horizon.

Thus, the way beyond the dominance of the evolutionist narrative and the historical entrustment (ḥavālat) that arises from it lies neither in rejecting modernity wholesale nor in blindly imitating it, but in attaining authentic "historical self-consciousness." This entails recognizing our present situation, understanding our belonging to a historical world with its own particular foundations, and becoming aware of the rupture that has shaped the modern world. Only with such self-consciousness can we establish a conscious, critical, and responsible intellectual relationship with modernity, science, and technology, a relationship that leads neither to passivity and submission nor to an indiscriminate and fruitless rejection.

It therefore appears that thinking about the future, particularly in societies such as Iran, is impossible without attaining historical self-consciousness. This requires understanding the present not as a stage in a linear and universal evolution, but as a turning point connected to a specific historical rupture. Only in light of such an understanding can we move beyond the binary of blind imitation and absolute rejection, and think through different possibilities of "being in the modern world.

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