



## The Philosophy of the History of Literature (A Study in Theoretical Foundations)

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### Abstract

This study focuses on the philosophy of the history of literature and the theoretical foundations underlying its methodologies. Literary historians interpret the progression of literature based on a philosophical vision and a particular understanding of the concept of literary history. Accordingly, each historian defines their terminology and selects the literary material they present to their audience. The methodologies of literary history are intrinsically tied to the philosophical principles adopted by historians. To explore the philosophy of literary history, it is essential to examine three key terms: (history), (philosophy), and (the philosophy of history). This involves identifying points of convergence and divergence between the historian and the philosopher of history, as well as distinguishing between their respective roles. The study seeks to determine whether writers of literary history are historians or philosophers of history. This can only be achieved by analyzing how these theoretical foundations are applied in their works. To address this, the study is structured into an introduction, five main sections (history, philosophy, the philosophy of history, the historian and the philosopher of history and theories of literary history), and a conclusion.

Keywords: History, Literature, Philosophy, Theoretical Foundations

### Introduction

Human culture in general, and Arab culture in particular, has witnessed a pattern of writing that traces the trajectory of literature from its inception to the present day. Works following this methodology are known as *books on the history of literature*. Such books began to emerge among Arabs in the early 20th century and have since been adopted for teaching Arabic literature in secondary schools and universities, a practice that continues to this day.

Literary historians have relied on general premises and theoretical foundations to interpret the historical progression of literature. A literary historian's choice of methodology is often rooted in the philosophical framework they adopt for understanding literary history. Through this philosophical lens, they define their terminology and select

the literary material they present to their audience. Thus, the methodologies for documenting literary history are tied to the philosophical principles that historians employ. This does not mean that every literary historian has their own unique philosophy. Some adopt previous philosophies either out of conviction or conformity, as in the case of Al-Zayyat (2001, p. 8), who admitted that the fivefold division he followed in his account of Arabic literature was merely an alignment with the majority: "*We preferred to follow most of our writers in dividing the history of our literature into five eras.*"

In both cases, whether out of conviction or conformity, the literary historian builds their approach on a specific philosophical foundation that guides their tracing of literary development. To examine the philosophy of literary history, it is necessary to study three terms: *history*, *philosophy*, and *the philosophy of history*. This involves exploring the points of convergence and divergence between the historian and the philosopher of history, distinguishing between their respective roles, and then reviewing the theories of literary history and their presence in Arabic literary history books.

### Section One: History

The term *Istoria* first appeared among the Greeks in the 6th and 5th centuries BCE, initially meaning "the pursuit of knowledge about things worthy of understanding" (Rosenthal, 1983, p. 16). This referred to knowledge important to citizens of the state, such as information about lands, customs, and political institutions, whether contemporary or from the past. This definition was broad and expansive but gradually became more focused, referring specifically to "the knowledge of events that accompanied the development of these phenomena" (ibid, pp. 16-17), thus giving rise to the common understanding of the term *history*.

Greek historians such as Herodotus and Thucydides used the term to denote "the tracing of historical events created by humans in the past, and the attempt to scrutinize these events and narrate them as accurately as possible" (Al-Nashar, 2014). In Greek tradition, the narration of historical events was accompanied by accounts of all the cultural aspects associated with those events, including religions, prevailing beliefs, architectural styles, and arts.

The term *history* took on broader meanings in Aristotle's works, such as *History of Animals*. Here, history extended beyond human events to include the history of animals and plants. The term could even be applied more broadly to denote the history of minerals or anything existing in nature. Aristotle also used the term to narrate the history of various sciences, recounting the history of philosophy, natural sciences, and psychology in his writings. Mustafa Al-Nashar suggests that "Aristotle's concept of history encompasses the historical narration of all that preceded, whether related to human events, animals, plants,

or the achievements of earlier researchers across all fields of human knowledge" (ibid).

The term then transitioned from the Greeks to the Romans, but its meaning deteriorated in Latin, eventually narrowing to refer solely to the narration of human events. This narrowing of the term is what Franz Rosenthal (1983, p. 17) highlights as the "decline" of the term's broader meanings, which led to its later, more restricted forms in English and French. The term evolved over time, acquiring a new meaning. The word "History" came to signify "the process by which a specific entity reaches a particular stage in its development. In the traditional view of history, this entity was humanity, particularly human political activities and institutions" (ibid). Thus, the concept of "history" became confined to human activities and institutions up until the 18th century. However, by the 19th century, the meaning of "history" was liberated from this narrow definition and returned to a broader connotation, as it had been in Aristotle's era where "it applied to everything that could be perceived, whether living or inanimate. This shift was logical, transforming history into an inclusive concept capable of claiming, like philosophy, that every subject and activity could be investigated within its scope" (ibid).

While the West expanded the concept of history from its restricted meaning to a broader one in the 19th century, the works of Muslim historians such as Al-Mas'udi and Al-Kafiji suggest that they understood this wider connotation of the term. Franz Rosenthal corroborates this observation, noting: "Such an extensive expansion in the meaning of the term 'history' was, to some extent, not unknown in Islam, though it was based on entirely different foundations" (ibid, p. 18).

Opinions about the origin of the Arabic term *ta'rikh* have varied, with some attributing it to Arabic roots, while others argue that it was borrowed from other languages. Scholars such as Hussein Mo'nis, Mufid Al-Zaidi, and Mustafa Al-Nashar believe that it originated from Greek or Latin, specifically from the word *historic* (Al-Zaydi, 2006, p. 6; Munis, 2001, p. 9; Al-Nashar, 2014, p. 14). Rosenthal (1983), however, dismisses the likelihood that the term *ta'rikh* was borrowed from Akkadian, Hebrew, Aramaic, or Ethiopian. He also rejects the possibility of its origin in Northern Arabic, asserting that the word's technical meaning suggests it must have emerged from a cultural center. Thus, Rosenthal (ibid, pp. 20-21) speculates that the origin of the term lies in Southern Arabic, where such a promising cultural hub would have been located.

In Arabic, the term *ta'rikh* was initially used to denote the marking of dates by day, month, and year. From this usage, it gained the broader meaning of "era" or "epoch," making *ta'rikh* signify a segment of time or a period. This term does not appear in pre-Islamic literature, the Qur'an, or prophetic traditions. Instead, its emergence coincided with the introduction of the Hijri calendar during the era of the second caliph, Umar ibn Al-Khattab. Rosenthal acknowledges the difficulty of pinpointing the exact time when *ta'rikh* began to mean "books of history," but he confirms that this usage was well established by the second Hijri century, when it came to denote biographical works (ibid, pp. 23-24).

And although the term "history" (*ta'rikh*) was used to refer to biographical works as early as the 2nd century Hijri and became more widespread in this sense by the 3rd century Hijri, it continued to retain its original meaning of chronology or dating. Furthermore, it came to signify two distinct meanings that must be differentiated: history as events that occurred in the past, are occurring in the present, or are expected to occur in the future; and history as a discipline aimed at preserving and recording these events using primary documents, archaeological evidence, and various proofs that affirm their occurrence as they actually transpired (Al-Nashar, 1997, p. 9). Similarly, in European languages, the word *Histoire* carries two different meanings: the first is "past events," and the second is "the record of events" (Abdelsamad, 2007, P. 23). Our concern in this study is the investigation of the events themselves, not the events per se.

Lexicons of terminology have distinguished between the Arabic terms *ta'rikh* and *ta'rikhah*. The former refers to "the totality of conditions and events that a being undergoes, whether referring to an individual, a society, or natural and human phenomena" (Wahba & Muhandis, 1984, p. 82). The latter denotes "the recording of these conditions" (*ibid*). Thus, past events and conditions constitute history (*ta'rikh*), while the act of tracing, narrating, and documenting these events in written form constitutes historiography (*ta'rikhah*).

Natural sciences have made significant advances since the 17th century compared to the humanities, owing to the adoption of the experimental method. This progress has sparked discussions about the feasibility of applying the methodologies of natural sciences to the humanities, including history. This has led to the fundamental question: Is history a science in the physical sense of the term, or is it closer to art?

Two opposing views exist regarding the scientific nature of historical writing. Proponents of the first view argue, "Historical writing cannot be a science; it can only be a craft, an art, or a philosophy -craft through the hunting down of facts, an art through the imposition of meaning amidst the chaos of material, and a philosophy through the pursuit of perspective and enlightenment" (Durant, 1993, p. 36). On the other hand, proponents of the second view maintain that "history is undoubtedly a science" (Sinopoli, 1981, p. a) justifying their stance by stating, "We can designate as science any body of knowledge systematically acquired through rigorous research in a specific type of phenomenon related to living people in a society across successive periods of the past, which classifies it among the descriptive sciences" (*ibid*). This disagreement, as Ahmed Mahmoud Sobhi observes, "has a philosophical dimension, and even when historians delve into it, they inevitably philosophize" (Sobhi, 1975, p. 8).

Charles Seignobos views history as akin to geology, the science of ancient eras, yet with its own distinct nature. He states, "While all sciences focus exclusively on one type of phenomenon, history must study two fundamentally different types of events simultaneously" (Sinopoli, 1981, p. a). As history examines material phenomena perceptible to the senses, such as people's conditions and actions, it also delves into

intangible psychological phenomena, such as people's thoughts, emotions, and motives, which can only be grasped through consciousness and cannot be ignored (*ibid.*).

The knowledge of events can only be acquired directly by those who witness them as they occur. However, those who do not observe these events firsthand can learn about them indirectly by studying the traces they leave behind. The indirect nature of historical knowledge means that historical phenomena are only comprehensible through their effects. As such, "The methodology of history must fundamentally differ from the methodology of direct sciences... except for geology, which also relies on indirect observation. History, regardless of what is said, is not a science of direct observation" (*ibid.*, pp. 43-44). While the historian observes traces directly, there is nothing further for them to observe beyond these traces.

Hearnshaw (1944) believes that the science of history "examines the remnants of the past and its records, which may help illuminate and clarify the present" (p. 9). He also contends that history, "in its scientific meaning, has no subject matter in itself; it is merely a method of inquiry. To assign it a subject, its name must be paired with a specific descriptor" (*ibid.*). Thus, writing about the past affairs of states constitutes the subject of political history, while writing about the past affairs of the church constitutes ecclesiastical history, and so on. The subject of history is broad and expansive, encompassing all human matters—everything that humans do, experience, construct, or demolish falls within the scope of historical research.

Among the early Arabs, human knowledge was divided into sciences and arts. The Qur'anic sciences, hadith, exegesis, and linguistic and rhetorical sciences were classified as sciences, while everything else was deemed arts. For instance, they would not say "the art of hadith" because it was considered a full-fledged science encompassing many sub-disciplines. However, they would refer to "the art of historiography" or "the art of biographies." Despite this categorization, there was inconsistency in their use of the terms. For instance, they sometimes referred to history as a science and other times as an art. For example, Ibn al-Nadim called all branches of knowledge arts, while Ibn Khaldun referred to history as both a science and an art (Munis, 2001, p. 58). Al-Kafiji (d. 879 AH / 1474 CE), however, described historical writing as a science, stating: "The science of history is a science that investigates time and its conditions, as well as the circumstances related to it in terms of defining and timing them" (Al-Kafiji, 1990, p55). On the other hand, the term "science" does not appear in the definition provided in the "Dictionary of Historical Terms," which defines history as "an organized, typically written account of sequential events, aiming to uncover their causes and explain their interconnections and overlaps, forming a unified narrative" (Nabhan, 2008, p. 84). Early Arab scholars often expanded the use of the term "literature" to include all fields of knowledge except for the religious sciences, such as Qur'anic studies, hadith, and linguistics.

The question remains: Can historical writing achieve the level of precision and

objectivity found in natural sciences? Can a historian function as a scientist in the natural sciences by completely removing their personal biases and emotions from their research? Hearnshaw asserts that history is a science with its own distinct nature. While physical sciences rely on observation and experimentation, history depends on critique and investigation. He states, "History, as a science, differs from physical sciences; it is not a science of observation or experimentation but rather a science of critique and investigation" (Hearnshaw, 1944, p. 11). If history is a "science of critique and investigation," the historian must strive for objectivity. However, Hearnshaw disagrees with the possibility of total objectivity, stating, "A researcher must conduct their investigation guided by the prevailing ideas, opinions, and interests of their time, as a historian cannot entirely detach themselves from the environment they inhabit, nor is it their right to attempt such detachment" (ibid, p. 10).

A historian must, as much as possible, distance their emotions and personal inclinations when documenting and interpreting historical events. Yet this does not imply absolute objectivity, as such an ideal is unattainable even in the natural sciences, let alone in the humanities and particularly in history. The objectivity of the humanities differs fundamentally from that of the natural sciences, with each possessing its unique characteristics and limitations.

### Section Two: Philosophy

The term philosophy (*Philosophie*) was first coined by "Pythagoras," meaning "love of wisdom." For him, a sage differs from a philosopher. He stated, "I am not a sage, for wisdom belongs only to the gods, and I am merely a philosopher" (Wahba, 2012, p. 468). A.S. Rappaport, however, believes this statement should be attributed to Socrates, not Pythagoras (Rappaport, 2012, p. 17). The term "philosophy" is a Greek word meaning resemblance to the presence of the necessary existent, and the primary philosophy is divine knowledge. The term is derived from *philo* (love) and *sophia* (wisdom), denoting "the science of the truths of things and the practice of what is most beneficial." Philosophy, according to Socrates, is "the rational inquiry into the truths of things leading to goodness. It investigates natural beings, the beauty of their order, their principles, and their ultimate cause." Plato defines it as "the search for the truths of existents and their beautiful order to know the first creator, holding a prestigious position above all sciences." Aristotle describes it as "the science of ultimate causes or the study of being as being." For al-Farabi, it is "the science of existing beings as they exist." According to Ibn Sina (Avicenna), it is "the understanding of all truths of things as far as man can comprehend." Al-Jurjani sees it as "resembling proof to the extent of human capacity to attain eternal happiness." For Locke, philosophy is "the study of the human mind," for Fichte, it is "the art of knowledge," and for Hegel, it is "the comprehension of absolute truths" (Al-Tahawni, 1996, p. 1287; Saliba, 1982, p. 160; Haseeba, 2009, p. 470).

The preceding definitions agree that the intellect can discern existential matters through connecting things but falls short in grasping many other matters. This is because intellect serves philosophy in understanding only the visible aspects of things summarily. However, philosophy is ignorant of what the intellect cannot comprehend—those matters lacking observable sensory effects. Since "philosophy is not an exact science, nor is it a science" (Haseeba, 2009, p. 471), it cannot produce happiness. Thus, "the knowledge of existing beings in their true nature is unattainable except through their creator, not through pure rational processes or imagined intuition" (*ibid.*). Hence, one cannot claim that philosophy is "the comprehension of absolute truths" because every philosophy contradicts another and may displace it. Displacement does not imply the annihilation of the displaced philosophy.

Islamic philosophy possesses distinctive characteristics. It is a link in the chain of human thought, borrowing from previous philosophies while enriching those that followed. Undoubtedly, Islamic philosophy benefited from Greek and other philosophies but is not merely an extension of them. Two factors contributed to the emergence of Islamic philosophy: the translation and Arabization movement of earlier civilizations' works and the rise of theological sects.

In antiquity, philosophy encompassed all sciences and was divided into two branches: theoretical and practical. The theoretical branch had three subdivisions: higher science (divine science), intermediate science (mathematics), and lower science (natural sciences). The practical branch also had three subdivisions: the governance of oneself (ethics), the governance of one's household (household management), and governance of the city, nation, or state. Over time, these sciences became independent of philosophy. Yet, some philosophers retained the comprehensive meaning of philosophy, applying it to all human knowledge. Descartes said, "Philosophy is like a tree: its roots are metaphysics, its trunk is physics, and the branches that emerge from this trunk are all other sciences, culminating in three principal sciences: medicine, mechanics, and ethics" (Descartes, n.d, p. 43).

Philosophy, according to Descartes, means the study of wisdom. However, "wisdom does not merely refer to caution in dealing with matters but encompasses comprehensive knowledge of everything a person can know whether to manage their life, preserve their health or explore all arts" (*ibid.*, p. 30). Thus, for Descartes, the purpose of philosophy is not limited to acquiring knowledge; it also aims to ensure that individuals achieve a dignified life filled with comfort and happiness.

Descartes found no certainty in the works of previous philosophers in the sense he sought. None succeeded in reaching a certain or self-evident principle that could serve as a starting point for deduction. He attributed this to the idea that "all conclusions derived from a principle that is not self-evident cannot themselves be self-evident, no matter how correct the form of deduction might be. As a result, all reasoning based on such principles

failed to achieve certain knowledge of even a single matter and thus failed to advance wisdom even by one step" (ibid, pp. 36-37).

While earlier philosophers multiplied and diversified the principles of philosophy, Descartes confined himself to four principles. He stated, "I thought that, instead of this large number of principles that make up logic, the following four would suffice" (Descartes, 1968, p. 130). The first of these principles, as Descartes expressed, is: "To accept nothing as true that I do not clearly know to be so" (ibid). This is known as the principle of certainty or the principle of intuition. Mohamed Al-Hadi Al-Tarablsi considers this principle to entail "a second significant characteristic of research: ensuring that the researcher has sufficient freedom to achieve the expected results. Thanks to this degree of freedom, Descartes was able to remove the sanctity of the past and make reason the most fairly distributed thing among people. This means that if some people fail to find the path to truth, it is not due to a deficiency in their reasoning but rather to acting haphazardly without a systematic method" (Al-Tarablsi, 2015, p.9).

The second principle is: "To divide each difficulty I examined into as many parts as possible, as necessary to resolve it" (Descartes, 1968, p. 131). This principle, called the principle of analysis, involves breaking down complexities into their simplest components to manage them. The third principle states: "To conduct my thoughts in an orderly fashion, starting with the simplest and easiest to understand, progressing gradually to more complex knowledge" (ibid, pp. 131-132). This is referred to as the principle of synthesis, which involves moving from simple to complex matters step by step until understanding even the most intricate problems. The final Cartesian principle is: "To make enumerations so complete and reviews so general that I would be certain of having omitted nothing" (ibid, p. 132). This is known as the principle of synthesis or complete induction, which entails meticulously enumerating and critically examining every detail, leaving no aspect unchecked. For Descartes, the particulars are the key to understanding universals (Al-Tarablsi, 2015, p. 9).

As humans elevate their thoughts, advance their reflections, and broaden the scope of their knowledge, their opinions become richer and deeper. Thus, issues may be revisited for discussion multiple times, each time they are approached differently. Researchers may arrive at conclusions that contradict those of their predecessors. Undoubtedly, new issues emerge that earlier thinkers had not encountered, and subsequent generations discover solutions that eluded the earlier ones. Nevertheless, the ideas of the successors do not originate from nothing, as "the history of philosophy is nothing, but a sequential collection of fundamental ideas formulated by those individuals with distinctive character, their perspectives on the world, and their judgments on life, with an explanation of what each has added from their own insights" (Rapaport, 2012, p. 60).

Since the 19th century, sciences have gradually become independent, and philosophy has been confined to logic, ethics, aesthetics, metaphysics, and the history of

philosophy. Some modern scholars have even separated ethics and aesthetics by applying experimental methods to study them (Academy of the Arabic Language in Cairo, 1983, p. 139). In modern times, philosophy is often defined as "the study of the fundamental principles that explain knowledge rationally ... or the collection of studies concerning the mind as distinguished from its objects or as opposed to nature" (Saliba, 1982, p. 161). For Husserl, philosophy is "the science of true principles, origins, and the roots of all things" (Haseeba, 2009, p. 471). Kant describes it as the science that investigates values related to truth, goodness, beauty, and the sacred (ibid). Meanwhile, Moritz Schlick states, "Philosophy is not a science but an activity or practice within every science" (ibid).

Contemporary definitions of philosophy differ from ancient ones. Ancient philosophy was presented as a certain science, but advancements in science have proven much of what philosophers proposed to be incorrect. Thus, modern philosophy emerged rejecting any superstitious beliefs in science. It refuses to disdain science and acknowledges it without reservation. The role of the philosopher is no longer confined to "loving wisdom" and seeking it. The modern philosopher is now bound by methods, logical principles, and established facts within the framework of accumulated knowledge.

Philosophy has consistently meant "knowledge of first principles," even if expressions and formulations have evolved. This inherited Greek definition has remained steadfast as the cornerstone of philosophy, even during the most significant revolutions and intellectual shifts. Then came Deleuze, who stated, "Philosophy is the art of forming, inventing, and creating concepts" (Deleuze & Guattari, n.d, p. 28).

There are those who believe that, regardless of how diverse its topics may become, philosophy remains confined to the exploration of three values that represent the normative sciences: the value of truth (logic), the value of art (aesthetics), and the value of action (ethics). By reaching these truths, science progresses and expands its scope, while philosophy remains confined to a single circle of truths, even if the forms used to express these truths differ and vary (Saliba, 1982, p. 161).

A.S. Rapoport expands on the topics of philosophy, dividing them into eight categories: "metaphysics," "philosophy of nature," "psychology," "logic," "aesthetics," "ethics," "philosophy of law," and "sociology and philosophy of history." Sociology, according to Rapoport, includes the philosophy of history and "examines the relationships between individuals" (Rapoport, 2012, p. 18).

The term philosophy may also be used to denote wisdom or an intellectual disposition that enables its possessor to view things with a transcendent perspective. The term philosophy might refer to a specific philosophical school, such as the philosophy of Plato or Kant, or to a collection of philosophies associated with a particular nation, such as Greek philosophy or Islamic philosophy. It may also denote the philosophical schools of a specific era, such as the philosophy of the Middle Ages or the philosophy of the twentieth century. Additionally, the term philosophy can refer to the body of work produced by

philosophers. When coupled with a specific subject, the term indicates the critical study of the principles and foundations of that subject. For example, "philosophy of science" refers to the critical examination of the principles and general foundations of sciences (epistemology). Similarly, "philosophy of history" refers to the study of the general principles and laws influencing the development of historical events, as in phrases like "philosophy of ethics" or "philosophy of religion" (Saliba, 1982, p. 162).

### Section Three: Philosophy of History

The term "philosophy of history" emerged in the eighteenth century through Voltaire (1694–1778), who employed it in his book *Essay on the Customs and the Spirit of Nations* published in 1756, intending it as a critical analysis of history (Imam, 2007, p. 31). However, some attribute the concept of "philosophy of history" to Ibn Khaldun, who distinguished between the "art of history in its external form" and the "art of history in its internal form" in his *Muqaddimah*. He states:

"The art of history is one of the arts cultivated by nations and generations, and journeys are undertaken for it... In its external form, it consists merely of information about days, dynasties, and the earlier generations. Words about them are multiplied and examples are given... But in its internal form, it involves speculation, investigation, and an exact knowledge of the how and why of events. It is an in-depth knowledge of the causes and origins of occurrences. It is therefore deeply rooted in wisdom and deserves to be counted among its sciences" (Ibn Khaldun, 2004, p. 81).

The first type mentioned by Ibn Khaldun refers to what is commonly called "the science of history," while the second refers to "the philosophy of history." According to the *Madkour Dictionary*, the philosophy of history is attributed to J.B. Vico. However, there is no doubt that Ibn Khaldun preceded him in this field, paying special attention to it in his *Muqaddimah* and expanding on it long before the works of Vico, Herder, Hegel, and others who followed. Some even argue that "Saint Augustine was the first to philosophize about history, albeit in a religious framework" (Academy of the Arabic Language in Cairo, 1983, p. 139).

Voltaire regarded all written history as nothing more than a collection of falsehoods and deceptions by which the historian manipulates the past to align with his future desires. He believed that only philosophers should write history, replacing the "wisdom of history" with the "philosophy of history." He argued that history should not focus on kings but rather on mass movements, and not on states but on humanity. Voltaire stated:

"I do not wish to write a history of wars but rather of societies... My subject is the

history of the human mind... I will not emphasize the history of lords and masters but instead seek to understand the steps humanity has taken from barbaric ages to civilization" (Abdulhamid, 2008, p. 110). Hence, he titled his book *Essay on the Customs and the Spirit of Nations, from Charlemagne to Louis XIII*.

The philosophy of history, therefore, involves "the study of the general principles governing the development of human societies. It aims to interpret the course of history in light of a general theory, treating it as a whole rather than as a series of isolated events. It establishes a philosophical foundation for the science of history by scrutinizing the methods employed by historians, analyzing sources, and studying the terminology used by historians" (Academy of the Arabic Language in Cairo, 1983, p. 139).

The term "philosophy of history" evolved further in the nineteenth century, especially through Hegel, becoming a fundamental branch of philosophy. Hegel approached the philosophy of history from two main perspectives: the first focuses on the methodologies of historical inquiry, examining the ways history can be written, verifying the accuracy of historical facts, and discussing their truth and objectivity. This perspective is associated with what he termed "the analytical activity of philosophy." The second perspective presents an overarching view of the trajectory of history, representing "the synthetic activity of philosophy" (Imam, 2007, p. 32).

In his lectures, Hegel clarified that he sought to provide a philosophical history of the world, focusing on humanity and its civilizational development. He stated: "The subject of these lectures is the philosophical history of the world. This does not mean a collection of general reflections on history... but rather the history of the world itself" (Hegel, 2007, p. 67). To clarify this history, Hegel emphasized the need to first examine the methodologies employed in studying history, asserting: "It seems necessary, for us to have a clear idea of this history from the outset, to begin by examining the other methodologies used in the study of history" (ibid). Hegel categorized these methodologies into three types: original history, reflective history, and philosophical history.

The original history, according to Hegel, means a kind of historical writing written by historians who live through the events they record or hear about from people. No one can see everything or hear everything by themselves, but they do not rely on what they hear from others "except in the same way a poet uses the language heritage that has already been formed before him... meaning they use it as just one of the components" (ibid, p. 68). These original historians, as Hegel describes them, "have transferred what happened in the world around them into the world of mental representation" (ibid) And the mental representation method that the historian uses to deal with historical material "is the same method that a poet uses with the material provided by his emotions or feelings" (ibid).

In this type of historical writing, the spirit of the age that shaped the events is the same as the spirit that shaped the historian, because the historian lives through the events he narrates. Also, the period that is being chronicled is often relatively short, and the events

are not thoroughly analyzed, because the historian relies on his personal observations and oral accounts. Among the historical works that represent this type are 'عجائب الآثار، في التراجم' (Marvels of Antiquities: Biographies and News) by Abd al-Rahman al-Jabarti, and 'نهضة الأعيان بحرية عمان' (The Renaissance of the Notables in the Freedom of Oman) by Muhammad bin Abdullah al-Salimi. Both historians recorded events they lived through or heard about. The first chronicles from the late 12th century to the early 13th century AH, while the latter chronicles the 14th century AH.

The second type of historical writing according to Hegel is 'theoretical history,' which he defines as "history that is presented in a way that does not limit itself to the period it narrates but transcends the spirit of the present age" (ibid, p. 71). In this type, the historian transcends his own era to others, writing about an era he did not live through and narrating events he did not witness. For this reason, he will rely on other sources to gather his historical material beyond mere observation and hearing, as in 'original history.' For example, if a contemporary historian wanted to write the history of the Arabian Peninsula before Islam, he would have to gather his historical material, classify it, and then present it. Here, the individual style of each historian becomes evident, in terms of presenting the events, interpreting them, and explaining the reasons behind them. Hegel's 'theoretical history' is divided into four forms: (comprehensive history, pragmatic practical history, critical history, and partial history).

The first form of 'theoretical history' which Hegel calls 'comprehensive history' seems similar to the type he previously referred to as 'original history.' However, in 'original history,' the historian writes about an era he lived through and events he witnessed or heard about, while in 'comprehensive history,' the historian seeks to present past events in a vivid and clear manner, making it seem to the reader as though they themselves lived through the events being narrated. The writers of this section of theoretical history, as Hegel states, "write in such a lively manner that the reader can imagine they are listening to contemporaries of the events and eyewitnesses to them" (ibid, p. 73). This is evident in the historian's narration of past events through the lens of the spirit of his own age, his thoughts, culture, terminology, and language, to the extent that the characters of the past might even be expressed in the language of the present.

Hegel refers to the second form of 'theoretical history' as 'practical or pragmatic history.' In this mode of writing, the historian does not study history with the intent of presenting and explaining events or understanding the factors that govern their course. Instead, the primary goal is to extract lessons, moral teachings, values, and principles from the past that can be applied to the present. Hegel believes that moral instructions, lessons, and teachings drawn from the past can be applied in the moral education of children. "However, the fates of peoples and nations, their interests, relations, and the complex fabric of their affairs, represent another domain that is entirely different from this" (ibid, p. 75). Since peoples and governments have never learned anything from history, Hegel argues,

“it is futile to regress into imitating the past, and it is in vain that the faded shadows of memory struggle with the life and freedom of the present” (ibid).

The third form of 'theoretical history' in Hegel's theory is 'critical history.' In this method of writing, the historian does not present the events of history themselves, but rather critiques historical accounts, examining their truthfulness and plausibility. Hegel states that “it would be more appropriate to call this 'the history of history'” (ibid, p. 76). The French have excelled in this approach, producing many works that combine originality, depth, and insight.

The last form of 'theoretical history' according to Hegel carries both particularity and generality at once. It is particular because it addresses a specific part of human history, focusing on a certain aspect (such as art, religion, or literature). However, it also bears the characteristic of generality, as it traces that aspect (art, religion, literature, etc.) from the beginning of history to the present. For this reason, it cannot be described as 'comprehensive history' since it does not cover the entire history of humanity, nor can it be described as 'partial history' since it is not limited to the history of a particular nation. For example, it does not cover the history of ancient Egyptian art but rather the history of art in general. Hegel believes that this writing style “constitutes a transition to the philosophical history of the world, as it adopts a general perspective” (ibid, p. 76).

The third type of history according to Hegel is what he calls 'philosophical history.' Hegel believes that the most comprehensive definition of it is to say that “the philosophy of history means nothing but the study of history through thought” (ibid, p. 77). Thus, it can be said that the two previous methods of writing history (original history and theoretical history) form the raw material for writing the third type (philosophical history). It is important to understand that the philosophical history Hegel refers to is the history of humans, because thought is linked only to humans among all beings. Therefore, the true history of humanity begins with the emergence of consciousness. Societies before consciousness, which relied on myths, are not part of human history. The history of the world “manifests itself before us as a mental process” (ibid, p. 78).

There are objections that may face the philosophy of history, or 'the study of history through thought.' In historical studies, thought should be derived from historical facts, whereas in philosophy, thought produces itself without any reference to the world of reality. This means that philosophy approaches history with preconceived ideas, and this might lead to attempts to adapt historical facts to fit these preconceived ideas. It seems, then, that philosophy follows a direction contrary to that of historical studies, and the philosopher's path contradicts the historian's path.

Hegel rejected these accusations leveled against the philosophy of history and attempted to clarify what he meant by the philosophy of history. He argued that the historian's task is different from that of the philosopher. The historian's task is to search for historical facts, gather materials, information, and documents, while the philosopher of

history's role is to interpret events without bringing preconceived notions. Hegel says, "We must approach history as it is, and we must proceed in a historical manner, that is, experimentally" (ibid, p. 79). Hegel emphasizes that the saying 'reason rules history' does not mean imposing philosophical ideas on the science of history. History should remain an experimental science, and the philosopher of history must honestly adopt everything that is historical. The investigation of historical sources, in all their types, is the historian's domain. He states, "This type of source we leave to those gifted professional historians who commonly use them (at least the Germans). Therefore, we can declare... that we must adopt everything that is historical with honesty" (ibid, pp. 79-80).

Thus, the only idea that philosophy brought to the study of history is that reason governs the world. There is no such thing as chance; rather, there is a rational process, and "we must at least have the firm, unshakable belief that reason truly exists in history, and that the world of reason and conscious will is not subject to chance but must manifest itself in the light of the self-conscious idea" (ibid, p. 79).

Arthur Marwick (1970) argues that the term 'philosophy of history' can carry three basic meanings. The first is that 'the philosophy of history concerns high-level theories regarding overarching causes and underlying forces, or the basic forces of history, viewed as an objective reality, namely the past" (p. 40) The second meaning is that the philosophy of history 'describes the general perspective brought by the historian, or by a school of historians, related to the historical problems they address, including theories about the explanation of events or the concept of progress.' The last meaning is that "the term philosophy of history is used as a near synonym for the historical method, that is, the actual process followed by the historian in their work" (ibid).

The multiple interpretations of the term 'philosophy of history' have led to its overlap with the terms 'method' and 'philosophy.' Despite the many books titled 'Philosophy of History,' some deny the existence of a science or branch of knowledge called 'philosophy of history.' In his book *History and Historians*, Hussein Munis emphasizes that 'there is no actual branch of human knowledge or historical study called the philosophy of history, because explaining events and attempting to search for their direct and indirect causes, and striving to extract general causes and judgments, all fall within the core of historical study itself and have nothing to do with philosophy" (Munis, 2001, p. 44). Therefore, if a historian, after comprehensively understanding historical events, issues a general opinion or provides a comprehensive explanation, it does not mean that he has left the realm of historians and entered the realm of philosophers.

Munis (2001) argues that "the philosopher is a philosopher by nature, direction, and method of thinking, the way of looking at things and reasoning, while the historian is a historian by his method and approach, and the goals he aims to achieve through what he writes in history. The true historian strives to stay within the boundaries of the science of history and adheres faithfully to its methodology" (ibid). He believes that the great figures

we call philosophers of history saw themselves merely as historians. Ibn Khaldun is not a philosopher but a historian, and his views on sociology do not constitute a general philosophy of history that we can talk about in the same way we discuss Hegel's philosophy or Descartes' and Kant's philosophies.

This does not mean that the historian has no connection to philosophy. The historian is not forbidden from engaging in philosophical thinking if he wishes, as long as he meets the conditions for historical study in his writing. However, this philosophy does not place him among philosophers, because a historian who is attracted to philosophy cannot adhere strictly to the historical methodology. He begins to lean toward philosophizing, delving into general judgments and broad perspectives. According to Munis (2001), there may be historians who carry profound and wise viewpoints, but there is no actual science, or art called the philosophy of history (ibid).

In general, humans, and historians in particular, may inquire into the essence of things, their origins, and their interrelations. However, this is not enough to make one a philosopher. 'The term philosopher, when used precisely, does not apply to one who occasionally looks at something, contemplates it, examines it, or doubts it, and then forms an opinion that he believes in and holds onto. Just as we do not call a glazier or a locksmith a philosopher for repairing a broken glass or fixing a lock, a glazier or locksmith is one who has made that work his craft in life, not just someone who performs it correctly, but someone whose persistent work has given him skill and proficiency' (Rapaport, 2012, p. 16). If that is the case, then who is a philosopher? A. S. Rapaport says: "We do not call someone a philosopher unless one of their main purposes in life is to study the nature of things and their interrelations, and their tool for doing so is thought, and they possess the ability to perceive things quickly through practice" (ibid).

While some may believe that a historian's grasp of historical events, issuing general opinions, and providing a comprehensive explanation does not place them among philosophers, 'Benedetto Croce' says: "Anyone who carries the title of historian is a philosopher, whether they intend it or not" (Al-Nashar, 2014, p. 19). However, he did not mean that the historian necessarily possesses the same intellectual capacity as a philosopher. Rather, he meant that every historian expresses themselves through the events they chronicle and the sources they rely on. The generalization made by Croce is not acceptable, as not every historian is a philosopher, even though some historians may have a holistic, comprehensive view of history. Therefore, it is necessary to distinguish between the terms 'historian' and 'philosopher of history.'

#### **Section Four: The Historian and the Philosopher of History**

Is there an ideal historian? And if there is, who is he? Abdullah Al-Arawi says: "We do not know the ideal historian, but we know Herodotus, Thucydides, al-Tabari, Ibn

Khaldun, Michelet, Carlyle, and so on... What connects them? Are they all historians in the same sense?" (Al-Arawi, 2012, p. 42) What is described as a historian here may be described as an excellent journalist there, and what is referred to here as the founder of critical history may be the same person as the founder of political science there. The one described here as a modernist may be described there as a jurist. Has this overlap ended with the era of specialization? And let's leave aside the amateurs who intrude on this art; is there no one among the specialists themselves who strays from their field of specialization? There is no doubt that many do, and this means that "the historian is not always a historian, and that someone who is not a historian might, under certain circumstances, turn into a historian" (ibid). Al-Arawi asks, 'What is the characteristic that temporarily makes anyone a historian?' He answers, "The awareness of change" (ibid). But does the historian realize that his orientation is different from that of the writer? And that his approach is different from that of philosophers? And that his philosophy is not the same as the philosophy of the wise?

Historical knowledge is relative because it cannot free itself from the shackles of politics. There is a close connection between history and politics; every historian recalls from the past only those events that help him achieve his purposes. It would be reckless to exclude any historian from this rule, even if he is a professional historian. "The great historians were, in fact, men of history in a dual sense: men of politics and men of study, recalling history and influencing it. There is no professional historian who has not tried to play a political role" (ibid). The duality of the political historian is not the only duality; there are many forms of dualities, varying in their significance.

There is also the duality of the literary historian. The epic is the history of the gods, and history is the epic of kings and leaders. The literary critic turns historical writing into an art form, as his focus is on the style of writing. Perhaps the difference is clear between the writer and the historian, due to the differing goals of each. The writer relies on both reality and imagination to allure and influence, while the historian depends on verified reality to refine and educate. There is a contradiction in the goal between history and literature. No one denies that there is a difference between a biography of Antarah written by a professional historian and one written by a creative writer, but the writer will draw his material from historical books, while the historian will present his stories in a literary form, using rhetorical techniques to make his work impactful. In the editing phase, the historian draws closer to the writer, and this is often seen in the style of historical writing. However, "the style of the professional historian is rigid and lifeless, and this is usually true, except in the case of the great ones" (ibid).

There is also the duality of the writer and the philosopher. Literary texts carry philosophical ideas and content, and they may even refer to philosophical schools and theories in order to highlight and spread them among the audience. Additionally, the literary form is present in philosophical writings to soften their rigidity and make them

easier to grasp. Does this mean that the writer could also be a philosopher, and the philosopher could be a writer at the same time? This duality is impossible for Mahmoud Al-Massadi (1979), who says: 'For me, literature is different from philosophy, and the writer is different from the philosopher' (p. 63). Each has its own domain, distinct and clear. "The role of the thinker or philosopher is to elaborate and detail a philosophical theory, or a set of views on a problem in intellectual thought, usually in the form of an essay or an extended exposition" (ibid). As for the writer's role, according to Al-Massadi, it is 'not to present you with a philosophy, an ideology, or a theory. If he does so, he is a thinker or philosopher' (ibid).

This does not mean that literature has no relation to intellectual issues; rather, it "stimulates thought and moves the soul's stillness, making it a source of reflection and a generator of ideas" (ibid, p. 64). However, limiting literature to this scope is considered by Al-Massadi to be restrictive, because literature, in fact, is broader than this. It transcends the intellectual and reflective domains; it should be a source of imagination, nourishing the senses and aesthetics, and cultivating poetic energy. Al-Massadi summed up the role of literature by saying: "It is the encompassing expression, or it should be the expression that reflects the totality of human being—its thought, intellect, emotion, sensation, imagination, and perceptions, that is, its essence and its vision in particular" (ibid). Literature is too broad to be merely a tool for stimulating thought. From this standpoint, Al-Massadi does not consider Ibn Khaldun and Al-Ghazali as part of the literary class; the first is a thinker, and the second is both a thinker and a philosopher, while Al-Mutanabbi and Abu Al-Alaa are considered writers, not philosophers.

Since there is 'history' and 'philosophy of history,' there are historians and philosophers of history, and there must be clear distinctions between them. Have scholars managed to identify these distinctions clearly, allowing us to assert that this is a historian and that is a philosopher of history? Do both historians and philosophers of history recognize each other? These are questions that must be raised and attempts made to answer them.

The first difference between the work of the historian and the work of the philosopher of history lies in their methodology. The historian begins his work from the specific event, while the philosopher begins his reflections from the comprehensive course of events. The historian's method is inductive and experimental—not to the degree of experimentation in the natural sciences. Therefore, the historian investigates the circumstances of the human phenomenon, the subject of the historical event he is recording, and attempts to arrive at an explanation for this event or these specific events that make up the larger event, by understanding the cause of this event, whether it is simple or complex. In contrast, the philosopher of history employs a rational method, using his reflections to reach the universal cause that explains the specific events. He attempts to understand the trajectory of human historical events as a whole, seeking to identify their overarching,

universal cause.

The philosopher of history seeks the organic unity between the parts of history, which, in his view, are disjointed and unrelated, with piles of events stacked on top of each other. He connects these disparate parts with a comprehensive view that does not focus on a specific era or society but instead encompasses the entire world from the distant past to the present moment. The philosopher of history thus moves beyond specific events to global history. While the historian's temporal scope is limited to the past and present, the philosopher's scope extends to include the future along with the past and present. The furthest goal of the historian, after understanding the past, is to comprehend the present by relating past events, linking cause and effect. In contrast, the philosopher moves through the past and present to the future. He does not contemplate past events merely to understand the present, but to anticipate future events.

Another difference between the work of the historian and the work of the philosopher of history is in their goals. The historian aims to record the event and verify its accuracy with as much objectivity and integrity as possible, while the philosopher seeks to interpret the totality of historical events to extract the general principles and rules by which human history proceeds. Here, the philosopher's subjectivity emerges in his interpretation of these principles or rules, which differ from one philosopher to another, depending on their general philosophical worldview and the historical data they contemplate, as well as its abundance.

The philosopher of history reconfigures historical events in an intellectual manner, reducing individual causes to one or two primary causes at most, and based on these, he interprets world history. In contrast, the historian adheres to deriving causes from a specific event, remaining committed to the individuality of the incident, time, and place. Thus, while historians focus on the particular, philosophers of history focus on the universal, moving beyond the constraints of time and place to what lies beyond. In their view, unity replaces the multiplicity found in the historian's work (Al-Nashar, 1997, pp. 18-19; Sobhi, 1975, pp. 124-125).

Abdullah Al-Arawi (2012) believes that "Voltaire is constrained by his philosophy and his preconceived doctrine that history is directed toward a definitive goal, which is freedom. For this exact reason, he is a philosopher of history, not a historian" (p. 45) He also believes that 'Ibn Khaldun is a historian because he is fully aware that the nature of his view on past and present matters leaves no room for any other perspective. He knows that he cannot be—a historian—a modernist like Muslim, nor a philosopher like Ibn Rushd" (ibid, p. 48).

Determining that someone is a historian, and another is a philosopher of history is not an easy task. Ibn Khaldun, whom Al-Arawi denies being a philosopher and considers a historian, is himself regarded by many writers as the founder of the philosophy of history before 'Voltaire.' The attempt to distinguish between the work of a historian and the work

of a philosopher of history does not mean that we can definitively say that this is a historian and that is a philosopher of history. There are historians who criticize the philosophy of history, and even deny its existence, while there are philosophers who reject that philosophy should be the history of philosophy. For the historian, the facts are relative, and the absolute is unattainable, while the philosopher asserts that the absolute can be understood by the mind. Here lies a complete contradiction. Therefore, "The professional historian does not recognize the possibility of a philosophy of history or a philosophical history. Likewise, the professional philosopher rejects the Hegelian notion that philosophy is the history of philosophy, replacing it with the idea that each philosopher has his own philosophy of history" (ibid, 51).

Langlo described philosophers of history as those who construct massive edifices that the historical material cannot support, likening them to someone trying to build the Eiffel Tower with only a few stones. Similarly, Charles Oman described philosophers of history as enemies of history, resorting to generalizations to cover up their glaring ignorance of the details of historical events. He stated that they construct a preconceived philosophical framework based on the perceived characteristics of past eras, supporting their ideas with evidence selected from the past that fits their arguments, while ignoring what does not align with their perspectives (Sobhi, 1975, p. 126).

It has been said that the philosophy of the Enlightenment was a philosophy of the absolute, using history, or rather subjugating it to its goals, to the extent that history was no longer history. It has also been said that history finds no solutions to its problems except within philosophy. What appears to be the case is that the historian needs philosophy, and the philosopher needs history. However, each accuses the other of being negligent. The philosopher says: "The historian does grasp the absolute, but he does not see it or recognize it. He uncovers the truth of Descartes, but only the philosopher is qualified to reveal it." The historian says: "The philosopher is blind to the path that leads him to the truth, and he imagines a method he calls the philosophical method, which is, in reality, just a verbal formula. The serious philosopher does nothing more than what the historian does. One is blind to the result, according to the other's view, and the other is blind to the path, according to this one" (Al-Arawi, 2012, p. 52).

Attempting a strict separation between history and the philosophy of history is a form of recklessness that leads to no practical outcome. This is because the philosopher of history needs the specific details found in the historian's work, just as the historian needs the comprehensive philosophical perspective embedded in the philosopher's work. The historian provides the philosopher with the factual foundations upon which the philosopher builds his reflections and intellectual laws. Similarly, the philosopher provides the historian with the wisdom needed to construct the events in a way that is coherent and interconnected, elevating his work above a mere recounting of repetitive, recorded events. If the historian does this, it means he is philosophizing without realizing it. It is better for

him to philosophize knowingly. Philosophy and history “both complement each other’s shortcomings, and thus the union between them exists despite the opposition of their respective proponents, philosophers and historians” (Sobhi, 1975, p. 130).

The philosophical theories presented by philosophers to explain history are numerous in number, varied in principles, and divergent in their premises. Among the most famous are the theory of divine providence established by Saint Augustine, the cyclical theory founded by Ibn Khaldun, the theory of doubt by Descartes, the theory of progress introduced by Voltaire, and the theory of heroism by Carlyle. Our aim is not to delve into all these theories; rather, what concerns our study are those theories that had an impact on the history of Arabic literature. These theories were adopted by historians as the basis for their methodologies in writing the history of our Arabic literature.

### **Section Five: Theories of Literary History**

Most historians of Arabic literature began their work based on the concept that political revolutions are the driving force behind literary movements. Consequently, they recorded the history of Arabic literature in line with this idea, which posits that literature is subordinate to politics. Political events are what shift literature from one state to another. Therefore, the political eras of prosperity are also eras of refined literature, while the "degraded" political eras are likewise periods of "degraded" literature. According to this view, literature is a mirror reflecting the state of the nation. The literary output bears the imprint of politics and social influence, which is why they made the boundaries of literary history coincide with the boundaries of political history (Alwad, 1993, p. 141). This viewpoint in literary history is known as the "school theory." Shukri Faisal (1982) believes that this theory is a mixture of both Arab and Western perspectives, as it is “a product of the blending of two types of literary history: the one that recorded Arabic literature and the one that recorded Western literature in Europe” (p. 15).

The theory of evolution (growth and progression) also has a presence in the history of literature. Proponents of this approach believe that literature is subject to the theory of evolution, much like a living organism that is driven by fate through stages that it cannot deviate from. For Friedrich Schlegel, poetry represents all literary forms within their natural developmental system. The stages of development begin with growth, followed by expansion, flourishing, maturity, rigidity, and finally, death. Schlegel considers this fate inevitable. Those who follow this approach assume a continuous, gradual change in literary forms, similar to what happens in the growth of living beings. However, the assumption of the continuity of literary development nearly negates the role of the individual, as this evolution becomes inevitable within the course of historical movement.

The theory of evolution also occurred to Jurji Zaydan (2005) when he attempted to write the history of Arabic literature. He vacillated between dividing literature according

to the theory of evolution and dividing it according to political eras. However, he eventually abandoned the first option in favor of the second. He states: "We hesitated a great deal in the plan we adopted for dividing this book, between dividing it according to the sciences or according to eras. To divide it according to the sciences means to cover each science individually, from its inception until now, starting with the earliest of them, mentioning the history of poetry, for example, the biographies of poets, and the changes poetry has undergone from its beginning to the present" (Zaydan, n.d, p. 9).

The theory of evolution is also apparent in Al-Rafi's work (2005), as he subjected language and its literature to the laws of growth and progression. Literature, like the human being, passes through stages of childhood, youth, and old age, which ultimately lead to death. This is clearly seen in Al-Rafi's discussion of the roughness of pre-Islamic poetry: "What we find in the poetry of the pre-Islamic era in terms of coarse meanings, rough expressions, and awkward styles is not what they themselves found in it and criticized. The words are symbolic representations of social interaction, and time influences the transition of these words from their meanings, just as the stages of life affect the meanings of development: youth, then maturity. What pleases you as a child is not the same joy you experience as a young man, in both meaning and significance" (p. 163). As time passes and life changes, words adopt new meanings, either completely unknown or historically learned. This is why "words take on the status of strangers, and some even become completely foreign when their conceptual images in society fade away, running the course of words that have died" (ibid).

As for the racial theory, it did not have a presence among historians of Arabic literature; they did not view the races of the writers from the standpoint of mental inheritance and the characteristics of racial genius. Instead, they emphasized the blending of different races in Islamic Arab culture. The peoples that entered Islam were diverse in race, language, and culture, "but once they entered the domain of Arabness, the various elements of their cultures began to blend strongly with the Arab element, leading to an Arab nation made up of different races. These races gradually melted into the Arab identity until they appeared to be one race" (Daif, n.d, p. 89). This is why historians of Arabic literature did not approach the study of the Sho'ubiyya (Persian influence), African heritage, the Qarmatians, or the Ottomans from a racial perspective, but instead examined these groups from a political and social angle to study their impact on literature. The races that entered Islam did not just adopt the Arabic language, but also adopted Arabic feelings, thoughts, and culture. Shawqi Daif argues that Egypt, Iraq, Persia, the Levant, and the Maghreb "became nations whose people were all Arabic in language, thought, feeling, culture, literature, and civilization" (ibid, p. 91). The idea of inheriting literary genius racially was not present in the minds of these historians, as evidenced by their emphasis on the intermingling of races in Islamic Arab civilization.

In his study of the genius of the poet Ibn al-Rumi, Al-Aqqad emphasized the

difficulty of proving that his genius was inherited from his Greek ancestors, due to the difficulty in identifying the Greek ethnicity from which he descended. He asks: 'Who were his Greek ancestors?! We do not know if they were the Greeks of the islands, the Greeks of the region known as Greece, or the Greeks of Asia Minor, where Arabs moved between Muslims and the Byzantine Empire. It is difficult to explain that these Greeks all shared one temperament, one nation, and one origin that passed on to Ibn al-Rumi, who then moved to a new environment and had children in this new environment, inheriting all the artistic genius that is now called Greek genius" (ibid, pp. 213-214).

Al-Aqqad described Ibn al-Rumi's genius as "Greek genius" (ibid, p. 214) because 'he had a genius that worships life, lives with nature, captures images and shapes, personifies meanings, and prioritizes beauty over goodness, or loves goodness only because it is a form of beauty... We know no more fitting description of these qualities than the term Greek genius, which characterized the arts of the Greeks in general.' However, the qualities that Al-Aqqad perceives in Ibn al-Rumi's genius can also be found in the genius of poets from different ethnicities who have no connection to the Greeks.

Al-Aqqad appeared initially skeptical about the hereditary nature of genius, yet he attributed too much to Ibn al-Rumi's ethnicity in an attempt to explain his genius, exaggerating greatly by saying: "The Greeks, as a whole, were like Ibn al-Rumi in particular, if the Greeks attained every pleasure in measure, Ibn al-Rumi knew no measure, being involved excessively in all matters" (ibid). Al-Aqqad exaggerated the portrayal of Ibn al-Rumi's genius to the point where it might seem as though he were talking about a Greek poet, not an Arab Muslim poet with the language and expression of the Arabs.

There are also those who approach the history of literature from the cultural theory perspective, viewing literature as neither immune to influence nor unaffected by it. Contact with other cultures may be the cause of its flourishing or its decline. Taaher Ahmad Maki links the flourishing of literature to contact with other cultures and civilizations. He attributes the rise of Arabic literature in different periods to the Arabs' mingling with the surrounding nations. He states: "Any literature flourishes based on the degree of interaction it has with the literature, cultures, and civilizations of others. The Arab renaissance in the pre-Islamic period was the result of the Arabs' interaction with neighboring nations through trade and political conflicts, such as the Persians and Romans. Their second renaissance in the Umayyad and Abbasid periods carried the marks of further contact, adding other peoples in Egypt, North Africa, and Andalusia. Their final renaissance, which began at the dawn of the 19th century, was a product of their contact with Europe" (Maki, 1987, p. 620).

As Arabic literature was influenced by the cultures of the surrounding civilizations, it also had its impact on other literatures. Modern European civilization was the result of the awakening brought about by the West's contact with Arab civilization, which reached its peak in the 10th century CE. The West came into contact with Arab civilization through Andalusia, Sicily, and the Crusades, where they encountered the sciences, culture, and

literature of the Arabs, which they then absorbed, imitated, and followed. “This does not diminish the significance of any national literature, even if it derives its strength from the literatures that preceded it in time and civilization, because humanity's development toward higher forms is a continuous chain, relying on the inheritance of the efforts of predecessors, with the present beginning where the past ended” (ibid).

If we examine the cultural theory in the history of literature, we find that no historian has fully embraced the application of this theory in their history of Arabic literature. Although some historians made references to the influence of other cultures in literature, these references do not imply that they fully embodied the cultural theory in their historical accounts. Shukri Faisal suggests that there are some applied examples of cultural theory among Arab historians, particularly in short, specific studies, such as Taha Hussein's study of Arabic rhetoric in the introduction to his book *Criticism of Prose* and Ahmed Amin's study of Ibn al-Muqaffa' in the first volume of his book *The Dawn of Islam*.

Taha Hussein certainly recognized that the Arabic rhetoric we have today is not the product of Arab culture alone. “To say that this rhetoric is purely Arabic is an exaggeration, as there is no doubt that most of the writers and speakers, many of whom were non-Arabs, contributed to it” (Hussein, 1941, p. 7). Similarly, to say that it is purely foreign, merging it with the Arabic language as was previously done with Greek rhetoric and the Latin language, is also incorrect, for it is clear that the Arabs contributed to it as well. Taha Hussein identified “three elements in Arabic rhetoric from that period: the clear and distinct Arabic element, the Persian element, which leans towards elegance and charm in expression, and the Greek element, which is connected to meanings, especially in terms of precision and the relationship between words and ideas” (ibid, pp. 7-8).

Taha Hussein traced the development of Arabic rhetoric, emphasizing the influence of Greek culture on the poetry of Abu Tammam and the prose of Abd al-Hamid al-Katib. He noted that the first “differed from his predecessors and contemporaries in his view of poetry itself, his meticulous approach to defining meanings, the unity of his poems, his focus on describing nature, and his inclination towards philosophical ideas, which he embedded in his poetry regardless of the topic he was addressing... It is clear that the Greek influence is evident in his work” (ibid, p. 10). As for Abd al-Hamid al-Katib, “he was one of the few writers of the second century who understood (the chapters) as the Greek rhetoricians understood them. His sentence structure clearly shows an influence from Hellenism, as he places adjectives where the meaning requires, even though it might irritate grammarians” (ibid, pp. 10-11).

Shukri Faisal believes that the studies by both Taha Hussein and Ahmed Amin represent an application of cultural theory. He emphasizes that Ahmed Amin “discusses Ibn al-Muqaffa' in a way that differs from other historians of literature and reached conclusions that others did not, while Dr. Taha Hussein uncovered the Greek influence in the science of rhetoric, the stages of this influence, and the writers who carried its banner.

He managed to trace, in the formation and development of this science, steps that could only come from applying a cultural perspective in the study of Arabic literature” (Faisal, 1982, p. 122). However, if we concede that both men applied the cultural theory, their application was partial. They did not base the beginning and end of literary periods solely on the cultural changes that entered the literature. Taha Hussein's use of Descartes' theory of doubt was the starting point for his history of Arabic literature, while the tripartite periodization adopted by Ahmed Amin—'The Dawn of Islam,' 'The Rise of Islam,' and 'The Zenith of Islam'—is essentially a political division, even though it carries symbolic significance.

To our knowledge, no Arab historian has adopted the cultural theory as the basis for periodizing Arabic literature. However, we find this approach in the work of the French orientalist André Miquel, who divided Arabic literature into four periods primarily based on a cultural foundation. It seems that Miquel was aware of the problematic nature of the term 'Arabic literature,' as he asked: “What is meant now by the term "Arab"? No, this is clear. The definition of the genre of writing is a risky one, and its accuracy is weaker, especially since the Arabic language is the vehicle for a religion that tends toward universality, namely Islam, which unites diverse nations that find themselves gifted with a common belief and a language considered ideal” (Miquel, 1980, p.6).

We can assert that the cultural theory is more clearly reflected in Miquel's quadripartite periodization compared to the partial application of the theory in the works of Taha Hussein and Ahmed Amin. Miquel used cultural transformations as the basis for the beginning and end of literary periods, diverging from the five-part periodization followed by most historians who based their divisions of literary periods on political changes. There is no doubt that applying the cultural theory allows the literary historian to reach conclusions that would be impossible through other theories.

Ibn Sallam al-Jumahi opened the door for applying the theory of doubt to the study of Arabic literature when he questioned the authenticity of some pre-Islamic poetry, addressing the issue of forgery. Subsequent writers and critics built on his ideas, continuing to reproduce his views on forgery, invention, and fabrication without offering definitive opinions on the matter. However, in the early 20th century, Mustafa Sadiq Al-Rafi'i (2002, pp. 175-267) became the first to address this issue in his book *A History of Arabic Literature* (1911), where he devoted the second chapter of the first volume to 'Narration and Narrators.' He expanded on this topic so much that it took up nearly half of the first volume of his book. However, his treatment followed the approach of previous scholars by merely presenting their opinions and recounting their writings.

Al-Rafi'i discussed issues that raised doubts about pre-Islamic literature, such as the 'fabrication and artifice in narration,' 'the invention of language,' 'the creation of poetry,' 'forger narrators,' and 'exaggeration in reports.' Yet, we cannot discern his stance on these issues, as he merely reiterates what the earlier scholars had said. For example, his

discussion on the invention of poetry does not differ from the previous scholars, as he states: “When Islam came and the Arabs were occupied with conquests and jihad for a time, they neglected poetry. Later, when they revisited its narration, after much had been lost with the departure of its narrators—the tribes created poems and attributed them to others to increase their number and compensate for what had been lost. There were Arabs with few events and poems, so they sought to match those with many. The powerful have the pride. They falsely attributed words to their poets, and the narrators took them from them” (ibid, pp. 228-229). Al-Rafi'i's words might initially suggest that he was among those who doubted the authenticity of pre-Islamic poetry. However, upon a closer reading of *A History of Arabic Literature*, it becomes clear that he simply presents these issues as they were addressed by earlier scholars without offering a firm opinion. This is confirmed by the fact that he later became an opponent of Taha Hussein when the latter raised doubts about pre-Islamic poetry.

One of the most prominent studies that applied the theory of doubt in the study of Arabic poetry is the British orientalist David Samuel Margoliouth's *The Origins of Arabic Poetry*, published in 1925 in the *Royal Asiatic Society Journal* and translated into Arabic in 2006 by Ibrahim Awad. The significance of this research lies in its bold approach to the issue of doubt regarding pre-Islamic poetry. Although Al-Rafi'i expanded on this issue in his book *A History of Arabic Literature*, published in 1911, he did not introduce anything new. His work was limited to narrating the opinions of earlier scholars and did not resolve the matter with an independent conclusion. Al-Rafi'i could not decisively settle the issue due to the deep-rooted religious and cultural heritage he carried, which made it difficult for him to adopt the same bold stance as Margoliouth. Thus, it is no surprise that *Margoliouth* was daring in his study, as he was not burdened with the religious and cultural weight that other Arab scholars carried.

It seems that the theory of doubt applied by *Margoliouth* in the study of pre-Islamic poetry was accepted by Taha Hussein, who published his book *On Pre-Islamic Poetry* in 1926, just a year after *Margoliouth's* study. This book originated as a series of lectures Taha Hussein gave to his students at the Egyptian University, as he confirms in the preface, stating: “I have already shared it before when I talked about it with my students at the university, and it is no secret to talk about it to more than two hundred” (Hussein, 2015, p. 23). Taha Hussein was aware that his research would face significant opposition and great displeasure, but despite that, he insisted on publishing it, even though it was unfamiliar to Arabs. He says: “I almost trust that some of them will receive it with anger, and that others will turn away from it, but despite the anger of the former and the avoidance of the latter, I want to publish this research (ibid).

What Taha Hussein anticipated happened, as copies of the book were confiscated from the markets, leading him to remove one chapter, add new chapters, and change the title of the book. It was published in 1927 under the title *On Pre-Islamic Literature* (Awad,

1987, p. 9; Al-Wad, 1993, p. 42). Criticism of Taha Hussein's lectures on pre-Islamic poetry began before they were published in the book. Abbas Fadly and Shakib Arslan both criticized him. As for Al-Rafi'i, he did not review these lectures until they were published in the book, and he confirms this, saying, speaking about Taha Hussein: 'We knew that he was giving lectures on pre-Islamic poetry, but we had no access to any of them, and we neither sought them nor thought about them... until we were alerted by the article written by Mr. Abbas Fadly, which he published in *Al-Siyasah*, and then our dear friend, the greatest writer of the East, Prince Shakib Arslan, wrote his article "History is Not Made by Assumptions" in *Kawkab al-Sharq*. After that, we wrote these articles in *Al-Kawkab* (Al-Rafi'i, 2022, p. 58). Al-Rafi'i later published these articles in a book titled *Under the Banner of the Qur'an*.

It seems that Taha Hussein became completely convinced of the fertility and comprehensiveness of the theory of doubt in various studies, whether for writers or readers. He states, "Descartes' method is not only fertile in science, philosophy, and literature, but also in ethics and life. You can see that applying this method is not obligatory only for those who study science and write about it, but it is also obligatory for those who read" (ibid, p. 33). If the readers are not convinced by this method and cannot free themselves from emotions and apply reason, removing the sanctity from the past, Taha Hussein says to them: "I am not being excessive when I now ask those who cannot rid themselves of the old and free themselves from the chains of emotions and desires, to read science or write about it, not to read these chapters, for reading them will benefit them only if they are truly free" (ibid).

Writing the history of literature requires the historian to classify and organize literary texts according to artistic and aesthetic criteria. It is not sufficient to rely solely on the temporal and spatial criteria when writing literary history. Therefore, the organizational principle provided by the 'theory of literary genres' cannot be ignored by the literary historian, as "literature and the history of literature are classified not based on time and space (era or national language) but based on specific literary patterns of organization and structure" (Wilke & Austin, 1991, p. 314).

Shukri Faisal discussed what he called the 'theory of literary arts' among the 'methods of literary study,' emphasizing that 'this approach to the history of Arabic literature will allow us to trace literary arts over time, moving with the ages, and taking us through the past to focus on one literary art or phenomenon from its early origins, and then proceeding through its various stages to observe its rise and decline" (Faisal, 1982, p. 75). However, the 'literary arts' referred to by Shukri Faisal are synonymous with 'poetic themes,' as he discussed examples such as 'heroic poetry,' 'love poetry,' and 'nature poetry.' Shukri Faisal also argues that 'fragmentation is one of the major flaws of this method in the history of literature,' as the historian divides the poet's works among different genres. For instance, he would record Al-Mutanabbi's poetry in one instance under praise, in another

under description, and in yet another under pride. One example of this 'fragmentation,' as Shukri discusses, is that the historian would have to divide a single poem, as most Arabic poems are varied in themes. "Such variation in themes ultimately leads us—when applying the theory of literary genres—to divide the sections of a poem" (ibid). This confirms that Shukri did not mean 'literary arts' in any way other than 'poetic themes,' which is why he did not discuss the application of the 'theory of literary genres' to prose. Instead, his focus remained on the history of poetic themes, and he made no reference to the 'theory of literary genres' in any form.

The issue of literary genres has not received much attention from modern Arab scholars, nor has it reached the level of becoming a central topic in their critical studies and literary research. Abdul Aziz Shabeel argues that ideological reasons are among the main causes for the neglect of the issue of literary genres among Arabs. The Arabs' attempts to assert their identity by returning to their heritage, through research and excavation, led them to emphasize modernity in their heritage to dispel accusations of lagging behind Western criticism, and to demonstrate the Arabs' precedence in uncovering modern critical approaches. Moreover, some Arab critics were keen to highlight the independence of Arabic literature from Western literature and its distinct characteristics. The 1960s marked the beginning of Arab interest in the issue of literary genres, but it was a modest beginning, often consisting of brief mentions in a few lines or paragraphs. Even when studies appeared, they were largely influenced by Western research. The actual Arab interest in the issue of literary genres began in the 1980s (Shabeel, 2001, p. 59).

To our knowledge, no one has written the history of Arabic literature based on the 'theory of literary genres.' Instead, there is confusion and overlap in the application of methodologies and theories in the history of literature. For example, a historian might dedicate a chapter to a literary genre, but the approach taken to track that genre is often based on political eras. Additionally, the confusion between literary genres is evident in the history of Arabic literature, with some arguing that all Arabic poetry is lyrical and denying the existence of narrative poetry, while others affirm its existence. A text considered a story by one historian might be considered a tale by another, with no clear standards defining the mechanisms for identifying literary genres among Arabic literary historians.

### **Conclusion**

This study has examined the philosophy of literary history and the theoretical foundations underlying its methodologies, addressing the terms "history," "philosophy," and "philosophy of history." It also sought to distinguish between the historian and the philosopher of history, delving into various theories that inform the writing of literary history. The study revealed several findings:

- The meaning of the term "history" has evolved over time, oscillating between broad and narrow definitions. Historically, it encompassed tracing all phenomena in nature but later became confined to tracking human-made historical events.
- Arabs initially used the term "tārīkh" to refer to the dating of days, months, and years. It later came to signify "era" or "epoch."
- The term "tārīkh" appeared during the caliphate of ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb with the introduction of the Hijri calendar. It was not present in pre-Islamic literature, the Qurʾān, or ḥadīth.
- By the third Hijri century, Arabs used the term "tārīkh" to denote two additional meanings beyond dating: first, to signify events that occurred, and second, as a discipline concerned with documenting and preserving those events. Thus, past events constitute "tārīkh," while the act of recording them constitutes "taʾrīkh."
- Scholars have debated whether history qualifies as a science, with some affirming its scientific nature and others dismissing it as merely a craft, art, or branch of philosophy. Early Arabs categorized history as an art rather than a science, as they reserved the term "sciences" for disciplines like Qurʾānic studies, ḥadīth, tafṣīr, and linguistic and rhetorical sciences.
- In modern times, philosophy is defined as the rational interpretation of knowledge, rejecting superstition and embracing science without reservation.
- The philosophy of history focuses on studying history through the lens of thought, exploring the general principles governing societal development, interpreting historical progression, and establishing a philosophical basis for the study of history by scrutinizing its methodologies and terminology.
- The philosopher's approach differs from that of the historian: the philosopher of history is primarily concerned with interpreting events, while the historian focuses on documenting, comprehending, and preserving historical events. A historian's expression of opinions or interpretations does not necessarily make them a philosopher.
- Differentiating between the tasks of a historian and those of a philosopher of history does not imply that we can categorically classify individuals as either historians or philosophers of history; the lines between them often blur.
- Researchers have employed various theoretical and philosophical frameworks to write literary history, including the traditionalist approach, evolutionary theory, racial theory, skepticism, genre theory, cultural theory, and the theory of literary schools.
- The racial theory had little to no presence in Arabic literary histories. Instances such as ʿAbbās Maḥmūd al-ʿAqqād's studies on Ibn al-Rūmī and Abū Nuwās do not represent genuine applications of this theory.

- Al-Rāfi 'ī's application of evolutionary theory was inverted, as he depicted literary genres declining from a peak of excellence toward degeneration. Thus, upward progression, which characterizes evolutionary theory, was absent in his work.
- Using cultural theory to define the epochs of Arabic literature risks making sweeping generalizations about each cultural era. For instance, the integration of Greek, Persian, or Turkish cultural influences into Islamic civilization did not uniformly affect writers across all Arab regions.
- No complete history of Arabic literature has yet been written based on genre theory. Historians have limited themselves to dedicating a book or chapter to a specific genre while adhering to political periodization.
- Arabic literature did not develop artistic schools or movements grounded in clear critical and philosophical foundations. Consequently, artistic categorization according to schools is inconsistent in pre-modern Arabic literature, and its application to modern Arabic literature is equally implausible, as most writers do not adhere to a single school throughout their careers.

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