

## Movements in Historiography: The French Annales, Psychohistory, and Historical Materialism

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History as a field of study is divided into two branches in terms of its philosophical foundations as (a) speculative focusing on the actual content of history and (b) analytical concerned with its methodology. This article deals with the analytical philosophy of history, focusing on the methodologies and theoretical frameworks used by different schools of thought in history. Despite their importance in the training of history students, theoretical frameworks or methodologies of history are not explicitly emphasized in the curriculum of history departments. The purpose of this paper is to outline the developments in historiography by documenting the theoretical frameworks, methods, and ideological positions of three different historical orientations, (1) the French Annales, (2) psychohistory, and (3) historical materialism.

*Keywords:* historiography, historical methodology, the french annales, psychohistory, historical materialism.

### Tarih Yazıcılığında (Historiografya) Görülen Akımlar: Fransız Annales, Psikotarih ve Tarihsel Materyalizm

Akademik çalışma alanı olarak tarih, felsefî temelleri açısından spekülâtif (içerikle ilgili) ve analitik (metodoloji ile ilgili) olmak üzere iki kısma ayrılır. Bu makale, analitik tarih felsefesini ele alarak farklı tarih akımları tarafından kullanılan kuramsal çerçeve ve metodolojiler üzerine yoğunlaşmaktadır. Kuramsal çerçeveler, tarih çalışmalarının temel yapı taşlarını oluşturduğundan akademik tarih yazımının doğasını ve fonksiyonunu şekillendiren temel unsurlar arasında yer alır. Kuramsal çerçeveler ve tarih metodolojisi tarih öğrencilerinin eğitiminde ve akademik gelişiminde önemli bir yer tutmasına rağmen tarih bölümlerinin müfredatında yeterince vurgulanmamaktadır. Bu makalenin amacı tarih yazımındaki gelişmeleri üç farklı tarih ekolünün (Fransız Annales, psikotarih, tarihi materyalizm) kuramsal çerçevesini, metodlarını, temel kavramlarını, ideolojik pozisyonlarını ve önde gelen temsilcilerini açıklayarak ortaya koymaktır.

*Anahtar Sözcükler:* historiografya, tarih metodolojisi, fransız annales, psikotarih, tarihi materyalizm

History as a term has two distinct yet interrelated meanings. It refers both to the past and to the written accounts of what happened in the past. What is implicit in this statement is the subtle distinction between history and the past. As just stated, whereas history is about the written accounts of the virtually limitless past events, peoples and processes, the past refers to all human events and associated processes, most of which are not recorded. That is to say, history as a field of study is not only the subject but also object of its own discipline. The discipline of history can be divided into two branches in terms of its philosophical underpinnings as (a) the speculative focusing on the actual content of history and (b) the analytical concerned with its methodology or the ways historical explanations are constructed.

The focus of this article is on the analytical philosophy of history. A wide range of historical movements can be found in the analytical philosophy of history. Understanding these movements or what changes occurred in the methodologies and theories of history over time is important for professional development in the field in that methodologies provide the building blocks for the study of the past by providing historians with conceptual tools used to construct the past. Theoretical frameworks in the discipline of history also shape the analytic thinking of historians and thus the nature and function of scholarly historical writing. Therefore, developing expertise in history necessitates a strong

command of different historical movements and their methodologies on the part of history students.

Despite their importance in the training of students, historical theoretical frameworks are not sufficiently and explicitly emphasized in many history departments (Tosh, 2002) as is the case for social studies education departments. As a result, the majority of students in history education and related fields tend to have a limited understanding of how the past is turned into history by different historical approaches. The implication of this shortcoming is that when these students become history teachers in high schools or social studies teachers in elementary schools, their inadequate training in historiography thwarts their effort to help students effectively deal with the conflicting accounts of the past. That is why teachers like historians and history educators need to be cognizant of different historical orientations to be able to plan, implement and assess their instructional activities in a pedagogically meaningful way (Yılmaz, 2008). A growing body of research on history education presents strong evidence that if teachers do not have a sufficient command of historiography and the syntactic structures of the subject matter of history, they may fail to translate that aspect of the discipline into curriculum and instructional practices, may not develop the ability to distinguish between more and less legitimate claims within a field, and thus “run the risk of misrepresenting the subject matters they teach”, failing to help students confront the complexity of the past (Grossman, Wilson and Shulman, 1989, p. 30; Stearns, Seixas ve Wineburg, 2000; Seixas, 2001, 2002).

The above paragraphs clearly illustrate the need to get familiarized with historiography. Because the space constraint imposed by the journal does not allow this article to review all the movements in historiography, it focuses exclusively on three historical orientations. The purpose of this article is to survey the developments in the theory and practice of history by documenting the theoretical frameworks, methods, principal concepts, ideological positions, and outstanding practitioners of the three different schools of historical thought, (1) the French *Annales*, (2) psychohistory, and (3) historical materialism or Marxist historiography, each of which has left an imprint in historiography.

### The French Annales

Scholars participated in the efforts to view and study history from an innovative perspective in order to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of the human past. The *Annales* movement can be defined in modern terms as “the attempt by French scholars to adopt economic, linguistic, sociological, geographical, anthropological, psychological, and natural science notions to study history and to infuse a historical orientation into the social and human sciences” (Bentley, 1999, p. 107). The *Annales* profoundly changed the conceptions of what constitutes and what makes history (Iggers, 1997).

Led by Marc Bloch and Lucien Febvre, the founders of the influential journal, *Annales d'histoire économique et sociale*, the historians making up the *Annales* school such as Braudel rebelled against the prevailing forms of academic history as of the late 1920s (Gilderhus, 1987). Their rebellious mood stemmed from their overt loathe for traditional diplomatic history (Bentley, 1999) and their professed conviction that political affairs did not lend themselves to scientific study (White, 1987, p.32). Bloch and Febvre challenged not only “the conventional division of the subject matter of history into a number of specialties (diplomatic, economic, social, and so on),” but also “the conventional primacy of political narrative” (Tosh, 2008).

Rejecting the narrow emphasis on politics, war, diplomacy, or event-oriented history, the French *Annales* school aimed to “grasp more totally and fully the whole dimensions of human reality” (Gilderhus, 1987, p.115-116). They sought to encompass the whole, the totality of life in the region, focusing upon the uniformities in the political, social, economic, intellectual, and geographic realms. The quest for a total history with wider scope and complex content required a new methodology or a wide range of repertoire of interests, methods, and interpretations (Breisach, 1994; Roberts, 2004). For this reason, Bloch and Febvre called for a flexible yet an analytically rigorous history that required the historian to identify a problem for analysis and then draw on whatever intellectual perspectives were appropriate, regardless of disciplinary boundaries (Tosh, 2008). They suggested that historians work with their comrades and brothers in the social sciences to capture the total history in the proper spirit. With the slogan “Down with all barriers and labels,” they claimed, “Man cannot be carved into slices. He is a whole. One must not divide all of history –here the events, there the beliefs” (Breisach, 1994, p.371).

The *Annales* historians did not consider their approach as the reflection of a new school of historiography but as a spirit characterized by openness of subject matter and method (Iggers, 1997, p.51; Tosh, 2008). Although the works of the *Annales* historians had implicit theoretical and methodological implications for historical studies, they hardly attempted to make their methodological framework explicit through the formulation of an explicit theory of history (Gilderhus, 1987; Iggers, 1997). “By and large, *Annales* scholars left their theoretical and methodological assumptions implicitly in their writings” (Gilderhus, 1987, p.116).

As social-scientifically oriented historians, the *Annales* historians refused to legitimize the notion of human beings as imprisoned by external conditions (Breisach, 1994, p.376) and attempted to discover the patterns of thought and behavior in a specific geographic, cultural region (Iggers, 1997, p.52). As opposed to the traditional historiography that viewed history in terms of movement across a one-dimensional time from the past to the future, they have offered a very different or radically modified conception of historical time by emphasizing the relativity and multilayering of time (Iggers, 1997). Their promotion of a historiography devoted to the analysis of “long-term” trends in demography, economics, ethnology, and impersonal processes (White, 1987, p.32). As a result, their writings were characterized by a sort of social and economic history with strong collectivist and environmental emphasis and the concept of order above that of deciding and acting individual (Breisach, 1994). Many of them studied the early modern period with its slow, immobile, geographical rhythm of traditional society and most frequently studied the cycles governing the economic and demographic aspects of life (Breisach, 1994, p.374). French historians of the *Annales* School were deemed to be the pioneers in sophisticated demographic history (Tosh, 2008).

Because structuralism, a strong French philosophical and literary movement, influenced the historians of the *Annales* approach, the exploration of a number of structural interpretations characterized the historiography of the *Annales* school (Breisach, 1994). These historians employed what is termed *mentalite* or the conception of a collective consciousness to analyze the past. They turned their critical eyes to “the mental and psychological characteristics of groups of people at specified times and places and thus moved historians beyond constrictive and sometimes myopic concerns with mere individuals” (Gilderhus, 1987). In this approach, the “collectivity” is the basic concept used to formulate explanations leading to total history. Led by the medievalist Jacques Le Goff, this branch of the *Annales* school took advantage of the findings from anthropology “to develop the study of collective mentality in past societies, focusing on the instinctual and emotional aspects of everyday life, rather than the intellectual achievements of the elite” (Tosh, 2008).

In a similar fashion, the *Annales* historians used a notion of the *longue duree*. As a conception of time, “this term depicted the structural continuities intruding upon the course of historical change” (Gilderhus, 1987, p.16). The *longue duree* consisted of the land, the sea, the climate, and the vegetation, all of which affirmed stabilizing influences over

human affairs and came to light at a slower pace and rhythm than the transitory events of politics, war, and diplomacy. Globalization was also one of the important themes in the *Annales* tradition. The history of the *Annales* can be viewed as the reflection of globalization in the twentieth century (Middell, 2003).

Since the *Annales* or *Annaliste* historians had distrusted politics and thus had contempt for political history, they neglected the studies of power and power relationships, a major shortcoming apparent in their written works (Breisach, 1994). Marxist historians have been the sharpest critics of this oversight (Breisach, 1994, p.376). The *Annaliste* historians were also criticized for focusing their attention primarily on medieval and early modern European history, thereby neglecting the modern historical period (Breisach, 1994; Tosh, 2008). The members of this school were also accused of “bearing light ideological baggage: most were avowedly non-Marxist, and few acknowledged the influence of feminism” (Tosh, 2008).

The criticism the *Annales* scholars received is balanced by eulogy on their works. Sharpe (1992, p.31) praised the *Annales* school for deepening historians’ knowledge of the past and providing tremendous methodological insights into the ways in which novel approaches and new questions can be developed and formulated to investigate the past. Similarly, Ankersmit (1997) applauded the *Annales* approach to the study of past for being resourceful in finding new and exciting objects of inquiry. Middell (2003, p.103) argued that *Annales* has remained the name of a major school of historical inquiry, the most celebrated and admired, lamented and despised school of historiography to which the twentieth century gave rise. He also claimed that the *Annales* school overshadowed the German Rankean model at the turn of the twentieth century, and gained so much momentum as to establish supremacy within the international discipline of history, setting the stage for a pluralist historical field, many centers of which were located in the USA. (Middell, 2003, p.105). As a proponent of the *Annales* school, Martinez-Shaw (1998, p.91) proclaimed that total history is amenable to fit into the pedagogical patterns and capable of allowing “a correct, complete and critical teaching of the past”. Lastly, this approach to the past has a resemblance of social studies which is integrative and interdisciplinary too, so I would state that insights to be gained from studying this historical movement in detail may help educators to find innovative ways for teaching and learning social studies in schools.

### Psychohistory

Psychohistory is the amalgamation of psychoanalytical theory with history or the investigation into the psychological dimension of the past by studying the influences of the psyche on history (Gilderhus, 1987; Kohut, 2003). In their view of the relationship between psychology -more specifically applied psychoanalysis- and history, the practitioners of psychohistory have assumed that “the history provides the subject matter or raw data and psychology the timeless tools of analysis” (Hunt, 1996). Psychohistorians believe that a greater awareness of the role of unreason and unconscious in human behavior would result in a better understanding of history (Rickard, 1981; Gilderhus, 1987, p.121). As a consequence, they focus their explanations on

personality traits by paying a close attention to their subjects’ pasts, especially to their childhood experiences (Walker, 2003, p.141). They attempt to demonstrate that the unconscious motivations or the inner world of human beings such as fantasies, aggression, frustration, identity crisis and other emotional states helped shape human actions and events in the past (Breisach, 1994; Nicholas, 2004). In this view, psychological forces precede everything else in giving shape to historical events and processes because they create the outside reality and its order (Breisach, 1994, p.342-344).

The genesis of psychohistory can be traced back to the works of Sigmund Freud who coined the term psychoanalysis. Freud thought that when applied to the people in the past, be them individuals or societies, psychoanalysis can reveal not only the outbreaks of collective psychosis but also the origins of cultural attitudes and even human civilization (Nicholas, 2004). Freud’s analytical framework, so to speak psychoanalysis, affected the way in which historians construct historical explanations about the past. Questioning the assumption that human beings with their ability to think rationally always acted on the basis of what knowledge was at their disposal, Freud put forward the idea that unconscious derives had determining effects on people’s behaviors (Walker, 2003). His theory provides structural explanations about human personality (the unconscious *id* or the unrestrained personality, the conscious *ego* or the unique self, and the *superego* or the restrained personality) and emphasizes conflict rather than consensus (Nicholas, 2004). Conflict is assumed to happen between the three parts of the personality (Walker, 2003, p.144). Even though Freud became more interested pessimistically in society, social institutions, and civilization in his late years, he devoted his intellectual interests to individual psychology -particularly the process in which personality is formed- in the major body of his work (Breisach, 1994, p.343).

This line of inquiry along with its ideas and vocabularies began to affect the historical writing around in the 1950s (Gilderhus, 1987; Breisach, 1994; Walker, 2003) in part because of diminished faith in reason and progress after World War II (Gilderhus, 1987). It enjoyed growing influence on historians in the following decades after the call for experimenting psychoanalysis by William L. Langer, the president of the *American Historical Association*. Langer declared that incorporating psychoanalytic theories into historical research could open up new possibilities to advance the discipline (Walker, 2003, p.141; Nicholas, 2004), and thus asked historians to practice its methods without the fear of jeopardizing the integrity of their professional endeavor (Hutton, 1986). Langer himself also applied the psychoanalytical method to the study of the extreme behavior, the character and role of mobs and crowds in the French Revolution, the modern totalitarian movements, and the long term psychological effects of epidemics (Weinstein, 1995). By applying the psychoanalytical method to the study of the past, psychohistorical works have focused on individuals or historical agents such as Hitler, Franklin and Stalin, and groups or societies such as Nazi Youth, Nazi Part, and Nazi Germany. The majority of works in psychohistory are devoted to studying the issues of (1) heterogeneity in individual experience, (2) discontinues in life, (3) the capacity of people to actively construct versions of the world

(Weinstein, 1995). In general, psychohistory is specifically preoccupied with establishing laws and discovering causes in precisely the Hempelian manner (Hunt, 1996).

Breisach (1994, p.342-344) argues that the following factors were instrumental in providing psychohistory with vociferous proponents and visible recognition in the field of history: Psychohistory owes its present status to the quest for a science of human behavior, to the strong individualism in contemporary Western culture, to the gradual loss of faith in progress and rationalism, to the attractiveness of the psychoanalytical theory's reinterpretation of evil as irrational or psychotic in the discourse of the modern world (the value judgments implied by the latter terms were less visible than the term evil), and to the inclination to view order as originating in the mind of the observer rather than being a feature of the observed world.

Kohut (1986, p.338) noted that two basic characteristics can be identified in the method used in psychohistorical studies. First, as opposed to the conventional historical methods which emphasize the importance of evidence in the construction of historical interpretations, the psychohistorical method first and foremost emphasizes theory drawn from psychology to make the past understandable. In other words, it provides explanations about historical agents and events solely on the basis of psychological theory without needing to substantiate historical arguments with reference to evidence from the past. Second, the conception of evidence found in the psychohistorical method is quite overarching in comparison to what is deemed to be evidence in the traditional approach to the past. Whereas historians accept evidence only from the past, psychohistorians look for evidence in the present to back up their interpretations of the past figures and events. While doing so, instead of proving the validity of the theory with evidence from the past, they just resort to psychoanalytic literature to find contemporary evidence.

Today three basic psychohistorical orientations are practiced in various forms (Weinstein, 1995). The first orientation is based on Freudian individual psychology which is considered to be the most widely practiced strand of psychohistory among historians, the most of whom are American psychohistorians (Breisach, 1994). The proponents of this branch of psychohistory such as Peter Gay, the most preeminent Freudian practitioner, employ the basic Freudian concepts of sexual and aggressive strivings to interpret the past. Sexuality and aggression are used as conceptual tools to "examine relations of power as a way of understanding the processes by which political, gender, and other hierarchies and unequal relationships are constructed and internalized or otherwise enforced" (Weinstein, 1995). Central to this approach is the individual as the main agent, who no longer was the celebrated rational being but the scarred battlefield of contesting internal forces. The fundamental force in the universe was the libido that was manifested in every individual as the sexual drive (Breisach, 1994). Freudian historians tend to explain history in terms of the historical subject's unresolved unconscious conflicts (Walker, 2003, p.144). Each individual human being, they argue, has to deal with an ongoing conflict between the internal drive of biological id for unlimited gratification and the collective restraints of nonbiological forces coming from the outside or

the cultural world (Breisach, 1994, p.344). This constant conflict has detrimental effects, they claim, on the individual psyche as manifested in irrational and abnormal behavior.

The second orientation, which is called "object relations" school informed by Melanie Klein's theory, resorts to the conceptions of very early infantile development to make sense of the past. It is based on (a) more remote, less accessible, and less assessable experiences and (b) imaginative constructions that cannot be disapproved (Weinstein, 1995). Childhood experiences have been regarded as the direct causes of later successes and failure (Breisach, 1994, p.345). The last orientation delves into such concepts as ego, self, and the social world to explain the past. This approach has the notion of people as meaning-seeking rather than pleasure-seeking and focuses on the ways that various ideological perspectives justify hierarchical and inequitable social relationships (Weinstein, 1995).

Having outlined the important points and arguments in psychohistory, I will turn to the question of how historians view psychohistory and its methodology. Psychohistory is deemed to be one of the most experimental departures in the twentieth century historiography and its practitioners have not been taken seriously by traditional historians (Hutton, 1986; Runyan, 2003). Whereas few historians employ the Freudian mode of explanation, many historians don't favor psychoanalytic theory (Breisach, 1994, p.343; Walker, 2003). Traditional historians' disfavor for psychohistory has to do with (a) the theory's assumption of historical constants and essentialism that is deemed to be ahistorical (Walker, 2003, p.142-147), (b) fragility of its truth claims, (c) self-confirming or unfalsifiable nature of its methods, (d) reductionism inherent in its methods (Gilderhus, 1987), and (e) psychohistorians' unwillingness to take cultural context into account (Breisach, 1994, p.342).

Jacques Barzun considers the works in psychohistory as a contrived attempt to impose the methodology of psychohistory upon the canons of the historians' craft (Hutton, 1986). David Stannard proclaimed that the psychoanalytical method is devoid of the capacity to help historians tell anything reliable about the past (Hutton, 1986). Hunt (1996) claimed that the ahistoricity of psychohistory is starkly apparent in the work of its best known proponents. Moreover, Hunt (1996, p.173) contended that even though psychohistory is seen as "an ideal vehicle for introducing the timeless questions of human motivation in the past, this is just where psychohistory has gone wrong, by focusing on the putatively timeless rather than asking how selfhood has changed over time." In a similar vein, Cohen (1999) argued that Freud's new theoretical formulations went wrong in practice.

Psychohistorians' cardinal argument that every historical source must be searched for its real meaning, which they say lies behind the observable reality, (i.e., the subconscious world), could not escape the scrutiny of the critics. Historians criticized this procedure for its potential threat to submerge the clarity and precision of historical research and pointed out psychohistorians' failure to provide a systematic context for such psychohistorical terms as "paranoid style of politics," "status revolutions," and "social-psychological tensions" (Breisach, 1994, p.347).

The critics also assailed the psychohistorians' tendency to reduce history to individual biographies, and thus to rejuvenate the new versions of the old-fashioned and discredited "Great Man theory", failing to address social underpinnings of psychological attitudes and individual actions (Gilderhus, 1987, Runyan, 2003; Kohut, 1986). According to this view, "psychohistory entailed the most blatant of empathetic leaps into the heads of historical actors and allowed for no believable methods of proof at all" (Gilderhus, 1987, p.121). Breisach (1994) similarly contends that this approach harbored a radical reductionism in that it viewed the fate of nations in particular and of civilization in general solely in terms of the psychoanalytical patterns of personality development. For instance, to grasp the American politics of 1912 and 1920, it is argued, one just needs to examine how Wilson experienced his personality development. That is, Wilson's personality, more specifically his fundamental ego problem and flawed psyche, shaped all of his actions and thus the American politics during that period. By the same token, the horrors of German totalitarianism and anti-Semitism are attributed to Hitler's so-called abnormal personality and sexual repression (Breisach, 1994, p.345).

Psychohistorians are also criticized for not paying attention to historical context. Walker (2003) states that Pflanze explained the difference between Bismarck's two contradictory statements not in terms of their different contexts and audiences but in psychoanalytic terms. Accusing psychohistorians of coming to the past with their explanation already in hand, Walker continues to assail the psychoanalytical theories and methods:

This demonstrates how psychoanalytic theory can perpetuate sameness and fails to allow for historical change. Psychoanalysis allows evidence that conflicts to be interpreted as having the same meaning. A theory that allows for evidence and lack of evidence to lead to the same conclusion is obviously highly problematic...The evidence that conflicts with psychoanalytic theory is made to fit the theory...Effectively the theory is confirmed whether evidence is present or absent, so Freudian psychoanalysis seems to be incompatible with the historical method because its self-confirming nature means that it cannot be tested against evidence. (Walker, 2003, p.145-147).

For the above reasons, the methods of explicit psychoanalysis have remained on the margins of the historical project in general (Hutton, 1986). Still, for all the attacks against its methodology, psychohistory has managed to escape from being a defunct orientation. Linda Kerber (2007), the president of the *American Historical Association* for the year 2006, recently declared that "psychohistory (or history informed by psychological perspectives) is a serious and important area of historical research."

### Historical Materialism

Karl Marx's ideas and theories with respect to such concepts as class, economics, and modes of production enriched historiography by both expanding the scope of the subject matters of historical writing and enriching the conceptual tools that historians use to study the past. Marx is the person who "fundamentally redefined the Western philosophical tradition, the subject-object relationship, and

the nature of intellectual labor" (Fracchia, 1991). Marx viewed history as the "theory of the conditions for the emancipation of the proletariat" (Breisach, 1994, p.297). Explicitly committing himself to a political project of socialism, he labored to bring the European revolutionary crises into historical perspective in order to capture the main logic of social development during a period of capitalist industrialization and to explain the possibilities of a future capitalist collapse (Eley, 2003, p.64). To Marx, history unfolded through a series of stages, such as the Asiatic, the antique or ancient, the feudal, and the modern bourgeois, each of which was determined by the prevailing conditions in which wealth was produced (Marwick, 2001, p.71; Blackledge, 2006).

Marx' engagement with history can be characterized by the commitment to the intellectual task of "descending worlds of thoughts to the actual world, from language to life" (Palmer, 1990). By looking at the forces shaping the past from a radically different angle, Marx together with Engels developed a new conception of history. His vision of history was partly influenced by the Hegelian system of thought (Breisach, 1994, p.293), and thus "the logic of Marx's explicit argument about the events, his explanation of the facts, is manifestly dialectical" (White, 1987, p.47). Whereas Hegel's dialectic stressed the conflict between ideas, the dialect Marx employed emphasized conflict among economic classes. According to Marx, because every social system and its mode of production harbored internal contradictions, which functioned as the motor of change in historical development, each produced its own opposite along with corresponding changes in the productive relationships. Therefore, the kind of philosophy of history Marx developed is basically called dialectical historical materialism (Breisach, 1994, p.297). Marx' maxim summarizes what assumption lies at the core of historical materialism: "it is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but their social existence that determines their consciousness" (Eley, 2003, p.63). Fracchia (1991) argues that historical-materialism is a branch of experimental science, which is:

based on certain guiding threads about the content of history and historical change..., specified with a fundamental theory of the nature of the capitalist mode of production...The epistemological purpose of historical-materialist science is not only to correct the categories of conceptual presentation, but also to provide the means of moving beyond it to the presentation of bourgeois societies in their concrete totality.

Since Marx thought that it was the material world that should be the proper object of historical study, he based his own philosophy of history on the materialist condition of the modern world of the humanity (Kelley, 2003, p.54). For Marx, the ultimate life-shaping force in history is the production and re-production of real life (Eley, 2003). From that perspective, Marx claimed that if human past was to be adequately understood, the ways in which people make a living and produce goods through different means must be studied (Breisach, 1994, p.293). Therefore, as a general principle, the Marxist history views the forces of production, the relations of production, and their forms of development as the main motor of history, considers "politics and culture in relation to production" (Thompson, 2000; Blackledge, 2006;

Tosh, 2008), and contends that the noteworthy political changes came into being as a result of economic crises and associated social forces needed to sustain them (Eley, 2003, p.64). In other words, the mode of production of material life is considered to be the most important factor that conditions the general process of social, political, and intellectual life. The superstructure manifested in the intellectual, cultural, and spiritual realms of human life in the form of philosophy, political ideas, religion, art, and so on was just the reflections of these primary socio-economic conditions (Breisach, 1994; Kelley, 2003).

According to this materialist view of history, the actual world is nothing else than the economic struggle to obtain a livelihood (Gilderhus, 1987) and the main motor of change was class conflict (Marwick, 2001, p.71; Eley, 2003). Not the ideas but the productive forces were the driving force behind history (Iggers, 1997, p.79). Challenging the traditional historiography, Marx argued that abstract and idealistic conceptions of the universe held less reality than the press of material conditions in an era marked by industrialization and dramatic economic change (Gilderhus, 1987). He then focused his attention on the ways in which the productive systems were organized and on the means by which people fulfilled their material needs (Gilderhus, 1987, p.108). For Marx, history stands for “a continual growth in productive forces, of destruction in the social forces, and of formation of ideas” (Breisach, 1994, p.294). Because Marx and his followers were single-mindedly interested in elucidating the transition from feudalism to capitalism or the revolutionary origins of bourgeois society, the majority of Marxist historians, especially in Britain and in continental Europe, investigated earlier periods, particularly early modern Europe, and revolutionary periods in French history (Judd, 1985).

Has the Marxist historiography been widely recognized and practiced by historians? Since Marx's socialist ideas came to the fore in his analysis of historical processes, the reaction of historians to the Marxist view of history has basically been shaped by their political orientations and the cultural context in which they are embedded. Even though Marxist conception of history was recognized by the Frankfurt school (Thompson, 2000) and became the official view of the Soviet Union from 1917 until its collapse in the late 1980s, it remained on the margin of historiography until the 1960s. “Only in the chaotic atmosphere of the 1960s did Marxism become a major influence on historians” (Tosh, 2008). Because the Marxist vision of history lent itself to emancipatory history and to total history, a history that encompasses elites and masses, many historians enthusiastically wrote in a Marxist fashion during the 1960s and 1970s. Marxism ultimately became the most dynamic strand of social history by the 1970s. Its influence on the writing of history proved to be enduring because of its potential to offer solutions on some of the most intractable problems of historical explanation (Tosh, 2008). “The theories of Karl Marx not only set in motion a continuing series of interpretations of history from the Marxist economic point of view but also affected historians of all other schools” (Tosh, 2008).

Some scholars have made judgments about the merits or shortcomings of Marxist historiography such as internal

tensions in Marx's scheme of history. For instance, Gilderhus (1987, p.115) and Breisach (1994, p.349) contend that due to the discrepancy between the Marxist interpretation of the human past and real life situations, Marxist scholars struggled with the intellectual puzzles of reconciling empirical evidence with theory and thought with practice. In Marxist vision of history, the complexities of actual human life were oversimplified via an excessive reliance on economic determinism and the roles of individual historical agents in shaping the historical process downgraded (Breisach, 1994, p.350-356). According to Kelley (2003, p.54), Marx's conception of history was deterministic and a pragmatic, “except that economics rather than politics provided the ruling methodology and revealed that the prime causal factors, property, followed by labor, and especially mode of production and accompanying class conflicts”. Tosh argues (2008), the Marxist historians (a) wrote history from the perspective of marginalized groups, (b) located the forward march of history with subordinate classes instead of the controlling elites, (c) emphasized the trajectories of progressive change in history, and (d) articulated the structural significance of these classes. According to one Marxist philosopher, all versions of the culture-oriented history or history from the below owe their frames of reference to Marx's conceptualization of history (Sharpe, 1992, p.27).

Eley (2003, p.65-66) identifies four major commitment that he thinks mainly characterized a Marxist approach to history: its progressive theory of history based on ascending stages of development; its “base” and “superstructure” (i.e., ideas, laws, institutions, literature, art etc.) model of social causality; its ascription of meaningful historical change to the conflicting interests and collective agency of social classes; and its sense of itself as a science of society. He says, “Commitment to the materialist conception of history was associated almost with an oppositional culture of dissent, intellectual polemics and working-class autodidacticism.” He then concludes that the Marxist historians classically reserved a first-order priority –ontologically, epistemologically, and analytically- for the underlying economic structure of society in conditioning everything else, including the possible forms of politics and the law, of institutional development, and of social consciousness and belief. Iggers (1997, p.108) detects three elements in the Marxist historical orientation: The first is the belief that social inequality is a central characteristic of all historical societies. The second is the role that production and reproduction play in the formation of cultures. The third is the belief that historical study must be based on rigorous method and empirical analysis.

In conclusion, the Marxist scheme of history along with its standpoints or assumptions can be summarized as the combination of a model of social and economic determination proceeding upward from material life; a clear demarcation of historical periods in line with modes of production; a theory of social change based on class struggles and their effects; the objectivist idea of history as social science, and objectivist approach to social understanding; quantitative methodology, long run analysis of economic fluctuation through prices; structural history, materialist model of causation; and left-wing empathy for the social

causalities of industrialization (Breisach, 1994, p.350-351; Eley, 2003, p.67-68).

### Conclusion

The three historical orientations reviewed in this article approach to the past with their own unique theoretical frameworks, methods and ideological assumptions. The intellectual and socio-cultural climate of the era in which they came into existence inevitably influenced their theoretical frameworks and methodological approaches. Their genesis was a kind of reaction to previously held conceptions of what history is, how the past should be studied, what methods should be practiced to study the past, what should count as the proper object of historical inquiry, what unit of analysis the historian should use when studying the past, and ultimately how the past can be made meaningful and understandable to the new generation. Each historical approach's answers to these very same questions were fundamentally different from one another. Each has its own strengths and weaknesses in their explanations about the past as illustrated in the preceding section. What they afford us with their differing approaches to the past is the multiplicity of perspectives which help us look at the past from different angles, broadening our insight into the past. That is, they enrich our understanding of the complexity of past events, peoples, processes, and institutions by putting emphasis on different constructs of history. On the other hand, explaining large-scale developments in history by reliance on just a few constructs should be viewed with skepticism as is the case for psychohistorians' and Marxist historians' reductionist explanations which are basically based on the construct of psycho or inner motives and the construct of economics or materialism respectively.

Even though the movements reviewed in this article have a number of different characteristics in terms of their study of the past, they do have certain similarities in common especially in terms of their philosophical underpinnings. The French *Annales*, psychohistory, and historical materialism all are based on the philosophy of history that tries to apply scientific methods or empiricism to the study of the past. They share the assumption that history is a science in terms of its nature. That is, they all belong to the positivist tradition and thus embody a positivist notion of history, aiming to find a sort of uniformities and regularities in the development of past events and processes as is the case in scientific endeavors. Each movement attempts to explain the past by making general statements of invariable relationship via the hypothetic-deductive model of reasoning which focuses on structural and causal explanations. But, not all historiographical approaches subscribe to this view of history as a science. Some historical orientations such as the linguistic and postmodernist approach to the past view history as an art rather than as a science, emphasizing the significant roles that subjective elements such as the historian's gender, ethnicity, ideological identification etc. play in the construction of historical knowledge. These are fundamental epistemological issues in the analytic philosophy of history that historians, history educators, history teachers, social studies teachers and history students are supposed to know to develop a sound conception of history. In short, a sophisticated understanding of why the

same events in history are interpreted differently by different historians demands a historiographical literacy; i.e., familiarity with different modes of historical writing or understanding of how historians' writings about the past get changed over time. One of the best ways to accomplish this, fostering historiographical literacy on students' part, would be to incorporate historiography as a mandatory course into the curriculum programs of both social studies education departments in the Colleges of Education and history departments in Liberal Arts Colleges.

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