

A Historical and Philosophical Exploration of Iranian Civilization

Bozorgmehr Zandi¹, Ali Mikaeil¹, Amirali R. Davoudpour¹

1- Iranian Canon of Medicine and Law, Administrative Wing of Law and Healing association, Iranian Watchdog of Medicine and Law

Email of corresponding author: davoudpour@canmedlaw.org

Accepted and published April, 2024

Abstract

This article explores the multifaceted concept of civilization, highlighting various interpretations that range from the advancement of technology and automation to the essence of human resilience and authenticity. By delving into historical and philosophical perspectives, it examines the notion of the "Great Civilization," particularly through the lens of Iranian history and the vision of the late Shah of Iran, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi. Despite his ambitious aspirations, the movement towards a Great Civilization faced setbacks, suggesting a paradoxical regression rooted in the intrinsic Platonic "form" of Iranian civilization. The article argues that civilization's progress is not always linear, as demonstrated by the historical trajectory of Iran. The Industrial Revolution's shift towards automation and its economic implications are discussed, raising questions about the future direction of civilization and the potential dominance of human essence over robotic precision. Through philosophical and sociological lenses, the article concludes by pondering the future of civilization, considering whether it will be characterized by the nullification of human essence or a reaffirmation of human prowess. This discourse reflects the dynamic and evolving nature of civilization itself.

Introduction

The concept of civilization has been interpreted and redefined throughout history. Different perspectives highlight various aspects such as automation, human essence, natural resilience, intellect, physics, nature, and human-made artifacts. This article delves into these interpretations, with a particular focus on the notion

of "Great Civilization" as envisioned by the late Shah of Iran, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi. Despite his ambitious vision, the movement towards such a civilization faced setbacks, which we will explore by examining the philosophical and historical underpinnings of Iranian civilization.

The Many Facets of Civilization

Civilization has been a subject of diverse interpretations:

1. **Automation and Technology:** Some view the advancement towards supercomputers and minimal human intervention as the epitome of civilization (Bainbridge, 2006) .
2. **Human Essence and Resilience:** Others see civilization in terms of human authenticity, the vastness of the earth, and resilience against nature's harshness (Glacken, 1967) .
3. **Intellect and Physics:** Certain philosophies regard intellect and physical sciences as the core of civilization (Koyré, 1957) .
4. **Nature vs. Human Artifacts:** There are also those who distinguish between the essence of nature and that of human-made artifacts when defining civilization (Mumford, 1967) .

The Notion of the "Great Civilization"

The term "Great Civilization" has been used multiple times throughout history, notably by Mohammad Reza Pahlavi. However, the movement towards such a civilization in Iran did not succeed (Ansari, 2003) . This failure can be attributed to the intrinsic Platonic "form" of Iranian civilization, suggesting that the progress towards a Great Civilization was, paradoxically, a regression (Boroujerdi, 1996).

Historical Regression

The Iranian attempt at achieving a Great Civilization seemed to move backwards, as the reality of its true form contradicted the superficial advancements (Katouzian, 2009) . This paradoxical regression is seen as a victory of historical reality over time, reflecting a deep connection between Iran's civilization and its past (Algar, 1969) .

The Non-Linear Path of Civilization

The history of Iranian civilization reveals that progress is not always linear. What was once considered the zenith of civilization can later be deemed obsolete (Lindholm, 2007) . The decline in the significance of human physical prowess and skills among the masses marks a shift from human-centric civilizations to those driven by automation and technology (McClellan & Dorn, 2006) .

Industrial Revolution and Automation

The Industrial Revolution marked a pivotal shift towards automation, leading to economic advantages over traditional economies (Landes, 1969) . This shift raises questions about the future direction of civilization and the role of humanity in it.

Philosophical and Sociological Perspectives

Philosophers and sociologists have long debated the implications of technological advancement and automation. Weber (1930) discusses the effects of rationalization and bureaucratization on modern societies, arguing that these processes, while leading to greater efficiency, can also result in the "iron cage" of rationality. Similarly, Foucault (1977) explores the relationship between power and technology, highlighting how technological advancements can be used as tools of surveillance and control.

The Future of Civilization

The ultimate question arises: Which civilization will we choose to move towards? Will it be one where human essence and powers are overshadowed by the precision and speed of robots (Brynjolfsson & McAfee, 2014) ? Or will humanity assert its dominance over robotics and prove its intrinsic worth (Harari, 2015) ? Furthermore, will humanity evolve into a "superhuman" with "divine" and "epic" abilities (Kurzweil, 2005) ?

Conclusion

Civilization is a multifaceted concept with no single definition. As we look towards the future, we must ponder whether we will move towards a civilization where human essence is nullified by automation or one where human prowess is reaffirmed. This ongoing discourse reflects the dynamic and evolving nature of civilization itself.

References

- Algar, H. (1969). *Religion and State in Iran 1785-1906: The Role of the Ulama in the Qajar Period*. University of California Press.
- Ansari, A. M. (2003). *Modern Iran since 1921: The Pahlavis and After*. Pearson Education.
- Bainbridge, W. S. (2006). *The Future in the Balance: Essays on Technology, Society, and the Human Spirit*. Routledge.
- Boroujerdi, M. (1996). *Iranian Intellectuals and the West: The Tormented Triumph of Nativism*. Syracuse University Press.
- Brynjolfsson, E., & McAfee, A. (2014). *The Second Machine Age: Work, Progress, and Prosperity in a Time of Brilliant Technologies*. W. W. Norton & Company.
- Foucault, M. (1977). *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. Vintage Books.
- Glacken, C. J. (1967). *Traces on the Rhodian Shore: Nature and Culture in Western Thought from Ancient Times to the End of the Eighteenth Century*. University of California Press.
- Harari, Y. N. (2015). *Homo Deus: A Brief History of Tomorrow*. Harvill Secker.
- Katouzian, H. (2009). *The Persians: Ancient, Mediaeval and Modern Iran*. Yale University Press.

Journal of Iranian International Legal Studies (IIntbar)

- Koyré, A. (1957). *From the Closed World to the Infinite Universe*. Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Kurzweil, R. (2005). *The Singularity is Near: When Humans Transcend Biology*. Viking.
- Landes, D. S. (1969). *The Unbound Prometheus: Technological Change and Industrial Development in Western Europe from 1750 to the Present*. Cambridge University Press.
- Lindholm, C. (2007). *Culture and Authenticity*. Wiley-Blackwell.
- McClellan, J. E., & Dorn, H. (2006). *Science and Technology in World History: An Introduction*. Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Mumford, L. (1967). *The Myth of the Machine: Technics and Human Development*. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.
- Weber, M. (1930). *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. Unwin Hyman.