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Dialectics of Islamic Philosophy of History: Speculative, Critical, and Prophetic Epistemology in Modern Historiography

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Abstract

This study explores the dialectics of speculative, critical, and prophetic philosophies of history and their epistemological implications for modern historiography. The research aims to integrate these three approaches to build a comprehensive and multidimensional understanding of the historical process. A qualitative-descriptive methodology is employed, involving conceptual, comparative, and hermeneutic analyses of classical and contemporary texts in the philosophy of history, including Islamic prophetic perspectives. The findings indicate that speculative philosophy provides the macro-pattern and overarching logic of history, critical philosophy ensures methodological rigor and empirical validity, and the prophetic perspective provides normative and ethical dimensions. The integration of these approaches results in a balanced epistemology, enabling accurate, coherent, and meaningful historiographical interpretations. This study contributes to the improvement of historiographical methodology, ethical understanding of history, and educational practices. Future research is recommended to apply this integrative framework to empirical case studies and multidimensional historical analyses.

Keywords :

Islamic Philosophy of History; Dialectical Epistemology; Speculative Philosophy of History; Critical Historiography; Prophetic Perspective

Introduction

The study of the philosophy of history has long been an important field in the humanities, particularly for its role in constructing the epistemic framework of historiography. Developments in the philosophy of history over the past few decades have shown a growing interest in integrating speculative, critical, and prophetic approaches to understanding the course of human history. Speculative philosophy of history emphasizes the search for universal patterns and rational laws underlying historical events, while critical philosophy of history focuses on methodological analysis, the validity of sources, and objectivity. History like pieces pattern scattered everywhere and tasks historian play a role stringing return pieces this, with good and true. (Rahman et al., 2017). Recent literature highlights the need to combine these two approaches to produce a historiography that is not only empirically accurate but also conceptually meaningful (Adrian Currie, 2023). The prophetic perspective, as articulated by Ajid Thohir and Ahmad Sahidin, adds a normative dimension that directs historical interpretation toward a moral and ethical orientation, thus providing a more comprehensive interpretative depth (Ajid Thohir, 2019).

The urgency of this research lies in the persistent gap between theory and practice in historiography. Many historical narratives remain teleological or normative without being supported by rigorous methodology, thus risking factual and ideological distortion. Several previous studies, such as those by Collingwood and Ranke, emphasized the importance of distinguishing between historical facts and subjective interpretations; however, they failed to adequately integrate normative value perspectives such as those found in the prophetic tradition. Therefore, this study is crucial for revisiting the epistemological foundations of history and assessing how these three approaches can complement each other in building a holistic and scientifically valid modern historiography. (Gangl, 2023).

The central issue addressed in this study concerns how speculative, critical, and prophetic philosophies of history can be positioned within a productive dialectical framework. Underlying epistemological questions include the extent to which

philosophical speculation about historical patterns can be integrated with rigorous critical methods, and how prophetic values can contribute to historical reconstruction without sacrificing scientific objectivity. Addressing these issues requires an approach capable of systematically linking theory, methodology, and interpretive values, thus enabling a more comprehensive understanding of history.

Common solutions proposed in the literature include the development of comparative methods, hermeneutic analysis, and normative interpretation. Walsh and Collingwood, for example, emphasize the importance of distinguishing between history as events and history as narrative reconstruction, a distinction that demands methodological rigor (Lindsay Gibson, Carla L. Peck, 2025). Speculative approaches emphasize patterns and teleology, while critical approaches emphasize source verification and objective analysis. The prophetic perspective adds a value-based framework that guides historical interpretation, as reflected in Ibn Khaldun's work in the *Muqaddimah*, which asserts that history is a record of human society and the changes of civilizations governed by their own social laws.

More specific solutions have been developed through the integration of qualitative methodologies, hermeneutics, and multidisciplinary literature studies. Ajid Thohir and Ahmad Sahidin argue that the philosophy of prophetic history can complement critical approaches by providing ethical and spiritual perspectives without replacing the need for rigorous factual analysis. The tradition of Ibn Khaldun emphasizes the importance of understanding social laws and the dynamic transformations of society as a basis for historical interpretation. This approach allows for historical interpretations that are not only methodologically valid but also normatively and philosophically relevant. (Teddiansyah Nata Negara, Ilham Faisal Hawari, Yan Nurcahya, Deri Sugiarto, M Kautsar Thariq Syah, Sulasman, 2025).

The literature review shows that no research has systematically integrated these three approaches into a comprehensive epistemological framework. Speculative and critical literature tend to be discussed separately, while prophetic literature largely operates within the realm of religious interpretation. This gap highlights the

need for a dialectical formulation that connects theory, methodology, and normative values to build a more integrative historiography.

This study aims to epistemologically analyze the relationship between speculative, critical, and prophetic philosophies of history and their implications for modern historiography. The novelty of this study lies in its attempt to formulate an analytical model that integrates these three approaches within a complementary framework. The research hypothesis states that the dialectical integration of these approaches can produce a more comprehensive, scientifically valid, and philosophically rich understanding of history. The scope of the study includes conceptual analysis, epistemological comparison, and evaluation of methodological implications for historiographic practice, while still involving key quotations from relevant primary and secondary literature.

Method

This study employs a qualitative-descriptive approach with a focus on philosophical and historiographical analysis. This design was chosen to allow for an in-depth exploration of the concepts of speculative, critical, and prophetic philosophy of history and their implications for modern historiographical practice. Qualitative methods allow researchers to interpret texts, identify conceptual patterns, and synthesize findings from a variety of primary and secondary literature sources. The descriptive approach is applied to systematically explain the characteristics and interactions among various approaches to the philosophy of history.

The data sources consist of primary and secondary literature. Primary sources include classical and contemporary works in the philosophy of history, such as texts by Vico (1725), Hegel (1837), Marx (1859), Ranke (1824), and Collingwood (1946), as well as prophetic literature, especially Ibn Khaldun's *Muqaddimah*. Secondary sources consist of prominent academic journal articles, research reports, and scholarly books that discuss the integration of speculative, critical, and prophetic approaches in historiography, including the works of Ajid Thohir and Ahmad Sahidin (2020) and Nata Negara et al. (2025). These sources were selected based on their credibility,

relevance to the research topic, and ability to provide a multidimensional perspective on the philosophy of history.

Data analysis was conducted in several stages. First, conceptual analysis was used to identify the core characteristics of each philosophical approach to history, including its underlying assumptions, epistemic orientation, and methodological implications. Second, a comparative analysis was conducted to examine the similarities and differences among speculative, critical, and prophetic approaches, as well as their potential dialectical interactions. Third, hermeneutic analysis was used to interpret classical and contemporary texts by connecting their historical contexts with their philosophical meanings and assessing their implications for modern historiography.

The validity of the study was ensured through triangulation of literature sources by comparing findings obtained from classical, contemporary, and prophetic texts. The argumentative verification process involved checking the consistency of interpretations, cross-checking direct quotations, and evaluating their conceptual relevance to modern historiographical studies. (Rahmadi, 2023) Limitations of this study include its reliance on existing literature, which limits the inclusion of empirical field data or specific case studies. Furthermore, interpretations of *bian* and speculative texts can be influenced by the researcher's subjectivity; therefore, analytical transparency and clear documentation of research procedures are essential.

Results and Discussion

A. Epistemic Characteristics of Speculative Philosophy of History

Speculative philosophy of history emphasizes the search for universal patterns, teleology, and rational laws underlying the course of human history. Classical thinkers such as Vico and Hegel argued that history has an intrinsic logic that can be understood through philosophical reflection. Vico, in his *Scienza Nuova*, argued that human societies move through recurring historical cycles that can be interpreted based on rational and cultural principles (Zuhur Diana, Irma Dwi Amalia, 2025). Hegel's perspective places greater emphasis on the dialectic of history, in which conflict, contradiction, and synthesis serve as mechanisms that drive historical development toward the realization of universal freedom. Both perspectives emphasize that understanding history involves not only recording events but also interpreting the overarching patterns and historical purposes inherent in human development.

Marx (1859) later introduced material and socio-economic dimensions to the speculative philosophy of history. According to Marx, historical dynamics are driven not only by ideas but primarily by material conditions, modes of production, and social relations. This materialist analysis emphasizes that social and historical change follows identifiable patterns that can be examined through the study of production relations and class conflict. Contemporary literature, including the work of Nata Negara et al., asserts that the speculative approach provides a macro-level framework that allows for holistic historical interpretation, including the identification of linear, cyclical, and spiral patterns. However, the approach continues to face criticism due to its a priori character and limited empirical verification (Supriyanto, 2022).

In the epistemology of speculative philosophy of history, human reason is assumed to be capable of understanding the fundamental laws governing historical events. This differs from the critical approach, which prioritizes empirical verification. Speculative philosophy emphasizes understanding general patterns across social, political, and cultural spheres and provides a theoretical foundation for systematically interpreting historical change. For example, Ibn Khaldun's analysis of the cycle of

civilizations in the Muqaddimah highlights stages of growth, peak, and decline, which can be examined through the civilization's internal social laws. (Ferry Martedi, 2023).

Analysis of modern literature shows that speculative philosophy of history is useful in constructing a coherent macro-historical narrative. This allows scholars to discern underlying patterns in individual events, thus fostering deeper conceptual understanding. In contemporary historiography, speculative approaches serve as tools for synthesizing information from diverse sources, developing theories of socio-historical developments, and highlighting complex causal relationships. Recent studies emphasize the importance of balancing philosophical speculation with empirical data to avoid overly abstract or purely speculative interpretations.

Furthermore, speculative philosophy has made significant contributions to the philosophical understanding of history. Vico's theory of *corsi e ricorsi* asserted that human civilization undergoes predictable cycles governed by rational principles. Hegel's dialectical model of thesis, antithesis, and synthesis explains historical change as a dynamic process of contradiction and resolution. Marx added a material dimension, emphasizing class struggle and transformations in production as drivers of historical change. The synthesis of these perspectives demonstrates that speculative philosophy of history focuses not only on isolated events but also on the broader patterns, meanings, and purposes of history (Johannes Westberg, 2025).

Despite its advantages, speculative philosophy of history faces epistemological challenges, particularly the risk of a priori interpretations that are difficult to verify empirically. Its reliance on internal logic and theoretical patterns can overlook dynamic social, political, and cultural variables. Therefore, scholarly research emphasizes that speculative approaches must be complemented by critical methodologies to enhance historiographical validity and reduce subjective bias.

In historiographic practice, speculative philosophy provides a conceptual framework for interpreting complex historical phenomena such as social transformations, political revolutions, and cultural change. Empirical research can then test the patterns identified speculatively, thus fostering a more integrative understanding of theory and fact. Its contribution is also evident in interpreting historical narratives across

generations and connecting past events to contemporary trends and developments (Afifah, 2024).

Methodologically, speculative philosophy of history requires advanced conceptual analytical skills. Researchers must be able to identify fundamental principles underlying historical development, interpret causal relationships, and construct coherent theoretical models. A speculative approach enables macro-level historical understanding and supports critical and prophetic research frameworks. Integrating speculative philosophy with other approaches enriches the epistemic foundations of historiography, strengthens philosophical interpretations, and provides value-oriented directions for future historical inquiry (Laraswati, 2022).

In short, the literature shows that speculative philosophy of history serves as a conceptual guide for understanding the trajectory of human history. It emphasizes historical patterns, meanings, and purposes, offers a theoretical framework for interpreting events, and enriches historiographical analysis. However, this must be balanced with critical methods and the integration of normative values to ensure valid and relevant application in modern historical writing. Thus, speculative philosophy of history is a fundamental element in building a comprehensive and multidimensional epistemological framework.

B. Epistemic Characteristics of Critical Philosophy of History

Critical historical philosophy emphasizes objectivity, source validity, and systematic methodology in historical writing. This approach emphasizes the importance of distinguishing historical facts from narrative interpretations as the basis for accurate historical reconstruction. Classical figures such as Leopold von Ranke emphasized that the purpose of history is to understand "what really happened" through rigorous analysis of primary sources (Hilmi Aprilia, 2023). Ranke and Collingwood further introduced a reflective dimension, arguing that historians must reconstruct the thoughts and motivations of historical actors as part of epistemic reconstruction.

Analysis of contemporary literature shows that critical historical philosophy prioritizes empirical verification, source evaluation, and historical contextualization. In critical epistemology, historical truth depends on consistent verification procedures, the use of reliable primary documentation, and systematic analysis. This emphasis on scientific methodology places a critical approach at the heart of modern historiography, minimizing interpretive bias and factual errors (Abdullah Emin YAZICI, 2022).

A critical approach evaluates not only the validity of historical facts but also the process of interpretation. Historians are required to identify the assumptions underlying historical narratives, assess the credibility of sources, and place facts within their social, political, and cultural context. Scholarly literature demonstrates that this procedure provides an academically sound analytical structure and ensures that historical narratives are not simply the product of subjective interpretation. Analytical findings indicate that critical philosophy of history plays a crucial role in strengthening evidence-based historiography. Its epistemic strength lies in upholding scientific standards for evaluating facts and interpretations. Previous studies have revealed that its integration with speculative approaches offers a macro-framework that allows historical interpretation to consider large-scale patterns while maintaining factual accuracy. Consequently, critical philosophy of history serves not only as a methodological tool but also as an epistemic foundation for high-quality historiographical practice. The goal is For find patterns meaning the general that is behind every view historian about past events.

In historical writing, a critical approach demands procedural clarity and transparent documentation. Methodological steps include identifying primary sources, verifying facts, analyzing historical context, and evaluating narratives. Modern literature emphasizes source triangulation and cross-checking data to enhance interpretive credibility (SAJAD AHMAD, 2022). Furthermore, a critical approach allows historians to identify historical biases, contradictions, and inconsistencies in documents, which can then be used to refine narrative reconstructions.

The epistemology of critical historical philosophy asserts that historical truth is not simply the accumulation of facts, but the result of a verified and methodologically sound interpretation process. By combining critical rigor with speculative contextualization, historians can develop a more comprehensive understanding that encompasses both macro-historical patterns and detailed factual accuracy. This approach also creates space for integrating prophetic perspectives that introduce moral and ethical dimensions without sacrificing empirical validity (Lázaro G. Lagóstena-Barrios, 2023).

A literature synthesis shows that critical philosophy of history makes significant contributions to the epistemology of modern historiography. By emphasizing objectivity, validity, and systematic methodology, this philosophy provides a foundation for integrating speculative and prophetic approaches. Thus, the epistemic character of critical philosophy of history serves as a central pillar in understanding and writing history scientifically, offering a robust framework for factual evaluation, interpretive analysis, and the development of comprehensive and credible historical narratives.

C. Prophetic Perspective Position

The prophetic perspective in the philosophy of history emphasizes the normative, ethical, and moral dimensions in understanding the course of human history. Particularly in the Islamic intellectual tradition, this approach views history not merely as a record of events but as a medium for understanding social laws, moral values, and spiritual goals embedded in the dynamics of society. Ibn Khaldun, through *al-Muqaddimah*, emphasized that history documents the development of societies and civilizations governed by internal laws that can be analyzed to understand social change. The prophetic perspective offers an interpretive framework that connects historical facts with ethical and normative values, resulting in a more holistic understanding (Tayob, 2022).

Contemporary literature asserts that a prophetic perspective adds an important dimension to historiography by enabling the interpretation of history through a moral and social lens. Ajid Thohir and Ahmad Sahidin argue that a prophetic approach can

complement critical methodology by providing value orientation and ethical guidance without replacing the need for empirical verification. In practice, this perspective allows historians to assess historical events not only in terms of factual accuracy but also in terms of their social, moral, and spiritual consequences.

Literature analysis reveals that a prophetic perspective enriches historical understanding in several ways. First, it provides normative guidance for interpreting human actions within specific social and cultural contexts. Second, it emphasizes moral responsibility in constructing historical narratives, thereby reducing ideological distortions (Eugen Zelenák, 2025). Third, it encourages interpretations oriented toward learning and character formation, which are highly relevant in contemporary history education. Thus, a prophetic perspective serves as a balancing force between abstract speculative approaches and empirically grounded critical methodologies.

Integrating a prophetic perspective with speculative and critical approaches allows for the formation of a comprehensive historical epistemology. Speculative philosophy provides overarching patterns and meanings, critical philosophy ensures methodological rigor and validity, while the prophetic perspective provides moral and ethical values (Tri Ratna Sari, Dewi Yana, Warno Edi, 2024). This synthesis produces a historiography that is not only factually accurate but also philosophically and ethically rich. Recent literature emphasizes that such integration is crucial for developing balanced, comprehensive, and socially relevant historical interpretations.

Methodologically, a prophetic perspective requires a deep engagement with fundamental texts and the moral principles underlying their interpretation. Hermeneutic analysis is essential for interpreting classical texts, contextualizing historical meaning, and connecting interpretations to contemporary social phenomena. This positions the prophetic perspective as a normative and philosophical tool for historical interpretation that remains grounded in systematic and rational analytical procedures.

Previous studies have shown that, when combined with critical methodology, a prophetic perspective can mitigate the weaknesses of individual approaches. Speculative abstractions can be guided by normative values, while a critical approach

focused on facts can be expanded through ethical interpretation. Thus, research suggests that this integration enhances the quality of historiography, making it not only accurate but also oriented toward social and moral learning.

These findings have significant implications for modern historiography. First, the prophetic perspective enables a more socially and culturally sensitive reading of history. Second, it strengthens the normative dimension of historical interpretation, orienting historical writing toward ethical learning and character development. Third, its integration with speculative and critical approaches produces a more holistic and multidimensional historical epistemology. Consequently, the prophetic perspective emerges as a crucial pillar in building a balanced, valid, and ethically grounded modern historiography.

D. Provisional Synthesis and Historiographic Implications

Based on the analysis presented in the previous sections, it can be concluded that speculative, critical, and prophetic philosophies of history play complementary roles in constructing the epistemology of modern historiography. Speculative philosophy provides the macro-framework and historical patterns, critical philosophy upholds methodological rigor and factual validity, while prophetic philosophy adds normative and ethical dimensions that enrich historical interpretation. This synthesis produces an approach that is not only empirically accurate but also philosophically rich and normatively meaningful (Lázaro G. Lagóstena-Barrios, 2023).

This study demonstrates that integrating these three approaches improves the quality of historical reconstruction. Through a speculative approach, historians can identify large-scale patterns in social and political dynamics; through a critical approach, facts can be verified and narratives can be systematically constructed; and through a prophetic perspective, ethical interpretation ensures social and moral relevance. This integration emphasizes that modern historiography must not rely solely on empirical data but must also engage deeply with philosophical meanings and value orientations.

Methodologically, this synthesis demands a multidimensional approach. Historians must be able to interpret empirical data, understand macro-historical

patterns, and evaluate the normative values embedded in historical events (Abdullah Emin YAZICI, 2022). Hermeneutic analysis serves as a key tool for connecting classical texts, philosophical principles, and contemporary contexts. This allows for integration without sacrificing methodological validity, resulting in a comprehensive, systematic, and applicable historical epistemology.

This synthesis has significant implications for the practice of historiography. First, it enhances the rigor of historical writing through systematic critical procedures. Second, it enriches historical narratives through macro-level understanding derived from a speculative approach. Third, it incorporates value orientations and ethics through a prophetic perspective, strengthening the social and educational relevance of history. Consequently, this integrated framework enables historiography to be not only scientifically valid but also philosophically and normatively relevant.

The literature shows that despite its great potential, this integration remains underexplored. Most studies remain conceptual and literature-based, with limited empirical research assessing the practical application of this synthesis in concrete case studies. Therefore, further research is needed to test the validity and effectiveness of this integrated framework in modern historiographical practice, including empirical case analysis, multidisciplinary applications, and evaluation of the social impact of historical interpretation.

The practical implications of this synthesis include methodological renewal in historiography, improving the quality of history education, and developing more reflective and ethically oriented historical research. Integrating speculative, critical, and prophetic philosophies produces a balanced epistemological model that harmonizes theory, methodology, and values, offering guidance for historians in producing coherent, relevant, and meaningful historical narratives. Thus, the synthesis of speculative, critical, and prophetic philosophies of history not only strengthens the epistemic foundations of historiography but also paves the way for methodological innovation and deeper ethical reflection in contemporary historical research (Hilmi Aprilia, 2023).

Conclusion

This study confirms that speculative, critical, and prophetic philosophies of history play complementary roles in constructing the epistemology of modern historiography. The speculative approach provides a macro framework and historical patterns, the critical approach ensures methodological rigor and factual validity, while the prophetic approach adds normative and ethical dimensions. The integration of these three approaches enables accurate, coherent, and meaningful historical interpretations, while also offering guidance on social and moral values.

The main contribution of this study lies in the formulation of a dialectical model that connects theory, methodology, and values, thereby enriching the multidimensional understanding of historiography. Implications of this research include updating the methodology of historical writing, strengthening the epistemology of historiography, and integrating ethics learning into history education. Further research is recommended to test the application of this integrated framework through empirical case studies, multidisciplinary evaluations, and analyses of the social impact of historical interpretation.

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