

Book Reviews

**Mamikon Airapetian. *World Civilizations and Economic Cycles: A Comparative Historical Analysis. Part 1. Concepts and Determinants of World History.*
Moscow: Editorial URSS Publishers, 2020**

Reviewed by Vlad Alalykin-Izvekov

“Cyclical patterning of history in its various forms ... has been and still remains man’s most valiant effort to make history into sociological science ...”

Dr. Grace E. Cairns

The author of scholarly materials under review is a prominent Russian scholar, Doctor of Economics Prof. Mamikon S. Airapetian, the Leading Researcher of the Department of Macroeconomic Forecasting and Planning of the Financial University (FinU), Moscow, Russia.

In his book entitled *World Civilizations and Economic Cycles: A Comparative Historical Analysis* (Airapetian, 2020) Dr. Airapetian introduces an original, fundamental paradigm of global history. In order to substantiate and present his ideas, the author turns to a vast array of classical and contemporary scholarly sources as well as introduces a significant number of new concepts, such as, for example, the notions of “time paradox” and “cyclical wheel of time.”

A brief introductory summary of the book says, in part:

The study presents a new philosophical and historical concept of civilizations, economics and politics as a system of large and small world civilizations. Its structure includes the world economic, generational and national political cycles. This model is a major research project that allows for the analysis and forecasting of world and local history in a fundamentally different context than is customary in traditional and modern research. ... The monograph will help to understand the multifaceted nature of world and local history and approaches to its interpretation, not limited to the narrow space-time framework adopted in modern management theory and practice.

The monograph itself is the first installment of a major, long-term research and educational project that will eventually include five parts. Those are named as follows:

Part I. Concepts and Determinants of World History.

Part II. Periodization of World History and Anthropocentrism.

Part III. World Civilizations and the Modern World.

Part IV. World Wealth and Modern Civilization.

Part V. Cyclical Processes and Economic Policy.

The cyclical patterning of history is one of the oldest, established, and most effective approaches in philosophical, historical, and economic fields of studies. One of the founders of ISCSC, the prominent Russian and American sociologist, historian, and philosopher Pitirim A. Sorokin authoritatively postulates:

...a study of the cyclical and rhythmical repetitions in social phenomena is, at the present moment, one of the most important tasks of sociology. It must be promoted by all means because it provides many conveniences for solving the most important sociological problems. The field of the repeated phenomena provides a possibility to grasp the regularities of social process: where there is no repetition, there is no possibility of observing regularity and, consequently, of formulating a sociological law or a valid generalization. Without such generalizations the very *raison d'être* of sociology, as a nomographic science, disappears.

In the second place, this field is more convenient for a study of causal dependence and functional interdependence of different social phenomena than the field of the unrepeatable processes. In the third place, the repeated rhythmical processes seem to be the most convenient for a quantitative study, which is the final purpose of any generalizing science. If in this way we may obtain only an approximately true generalization, this must not trouble us. We still know so little in the “mysterious” world of social events that any real approximate knowledge is of great value. ...

By the study of an ever-increasing number of different social phenomena which are repeated from time to time, we approach nearer a solution of the problems of what in the incessantly changing process of history is relatively permanent and what is quite temporary; what is relatively universal and what is purely local; what is the tempo of a change of different social processes; what relations between two or more phenomena are incidental and which are really causal. (Sorokin, 1927: 39-40).

Dr. Airapetian's paradigm justifiably includes a significant number of interacting historical cycles, for example large, approximately 2200-year cycles, shorter, about 300-year-old cycles, as well as “generation-based” 34-year cycles.

For example, the “oil cycle” corresponds to the “oil generation” (1896-1930), the “nuclear cycle” to the “nuclear generation” (1930-1964), the “space cycle” to the “space generation” (1964-1998), and the “digital cycle” to the “digital generation” (1998-2032).

Even though some social scholars deem the generation-based cyclicity as being non-representative, or even superficial, in fact, the age-based approach rests on a firm scientific foundation.

In his classic volume, *The System of Sociology*, Pitirim A. Sorokin describes three main groupings based on race, gender, and age, as milestones of his group stratification. According to the scholar, these powerful congregations exert perennial influence not only on lives of other groups, as well as on the fate of the population, but on the course of social events in general. (Sorokin, 2008: 461-462). The scholar writes:

Among forms of struggle of many social groups on the historical field ... there has been and remains - explicit or secret, conscious or not - the eternal struggle of “fathers and children.” ... All these and similar phenomena, all these shifts of rights and responsibilities associated with age, were caused by the activities of age groups. The age group is their creator. It rewinds the springs that cause these effects” (Sorokin, 2008: 459-460).

Sorokin further affirms these views in his magnum opus *Society, Culture, and Personality*. (Sorokin, 1947: 181-194).

All the scholarly materials under review abound with insightful observations, original thoughts, and profound scholarly judgments. They are well-structured and supplemented by sophisticated and well-presented diagrams. The volume is highly interdisciplinary, yet fundamental in character, as well as effectively and adequately addresses the postulated problems. The book as a whole presents a fundamental scholarly contribution to the theory of global, macro-level and long-term philosophical, sociocultural, socio-historic, and socioeconomic studies.

A few minor suggestions seem to be in order. On page 434 of the manuscript, the author suggests: “This bibliography shows the years of publication or creation of sources in the original language. A complete and updated bibliography, including in Russian, will be given in the fifth part of the study.” It would seem appropriate (however not mandatory) if the author would include such important components of the contemporary scholarly apparatus as:

1. A glossary of terms with definitions thereof.
2. A list of numbered notes corresponding to the book chapters.
3. An index, i.e. a list of paginated subjects and names.

References

- Sorokin, P. (2008). *The System of Sociology*. (In Russian). Moscow: Astrel.
- Sorokin, P. (1947). *Society, Culture, and Personality: Their Structure and Dynamics*. A System of General Sociology. New York & London: Harper & Brothers Publishers.
- Sorokin, P. (1927) *A Survey of the Cyclical Conceptions of Social and Historical Process*. Social Forces. Oxford University Press. Vol. 6, No. 1 (Sep., 1927), pp. 28-40.