
REVIEWS AND INFORMATION

A CONSTRUCTIVE PROOF OF THE POSSIBILITY OF HISTORIOSOPHY (Review of Leonid Grinin, *Macrohistory and Globalization*, Volgograd 2012; 'Uchitel', Publishing House)

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Let us first make a few remarks on the philosophy of history (= historiosophy). In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries it flourished which is evidenced by the works of Vico, Condorcet, Kant, Hegel, and Marx... Then, in the beginning of the previous century, it was Oswald Spengler and Arnold Toynbee who presented their vast visions of History. Meanwhile, the postwar period was dominated by various forms of criticism addressed to historiosophy. Interestingly, this criticism was developed in very different traditions: on the one hand, Karl R. Popper's *The Open Society and Its Enemies* and *The Poverty of Historicism* are to be mentioned in this context, on the other: Jean-Francois Lyotard's *Condition postmoderne* – to mention but two names. (Let us note that some connections seem to exist between this criticism of historiosophy and Raymond Aron's and Daniel Bell's 'end-of-ideology' thesis.) The core element of this criticism could be formulated very briefly in the following way: (non-trivial) historiosophy is impossible. These remarks are necessary to formulate my general opinion about the value of the reviewed here book by Leonid Grinin (and Andrey Korotayev– who co-authored three sections of it).

This book offers a proof of possibility of historiosophy; a proof which is of great value due to its constructive character (the notion is taken from mathematics, and is to preserve the connotations related to the opposition of constructive and non-constructive proofs) since it presents a non-trivial and empirically well-grounded historiosophy. Having formulated the central element of my opinion, I would like to supplement it with two comments. First, the book is not only about macrohistory in general, but also about its contemporary phase, rightly – as I believe – characterized with the notion of globalization. Second, the book seems to manifest the conviction that just at this phase of macrohistory – in the time of globalization, historiosophy is of particular – and, let us stress: practical – importance.

Let us formulate some additional remarks to the second comment. At the very beginning of his book, Grinin writes:

Although it has become quite a common idea that it is just people who make history, nevertheless the interest to the individual's opportunities and ways to influence the choice of historical alternatives significantly decreased. In our opinion, this is unjustified and wrongful especially in the present period when the scale of influence of different agents empowered with certain opportunities greatly increases (Grinin 2012: 5–6).

Journal of Globalization Studies, Vol. 8 No. 1, May 2017 156–158

I think that these words should be read and discussed together with Grinin's remarks concluding his analysis of the production revolutions: *'uncontrolled (sic! – W. Cz.) scientific-technological and economic changes lead to growth of various deformations, crisis phenomena in various spheres of life... the price paid for such a rapid transformation of such an immensely complex system as modern humankind may be very high'* (p. 45). If put together, Grinin's theses might be rephrased as follows: We (human beings) are responsible for our future which is neither predetermined nor absolutely (in a 'God-like' way) constructible; therefore, we should know which alternative futures are actually (empirically) possible, and which – but logically (conceptually). This thesis leads us to the issues discussed in the Part I ('Macrohistory Surveys'). Let us start with Chapter 2, devoted to the role of individual of history. The importance of this issue is obvious: if we all are responsible for our future, then each of us is responsible. But to the same degree? The answer seems to be obvious: no, the degree of responsibility varies from individual to individual. And just this chapter delivers us a set of analytical instruments which may help us to estimate the degree of individual responsibility. This set contains a classification of roles played by individuals in history (pp. 69–70), discussion of what Grinin calls 'the situation factor' (pp. 74–77). Particularly interesting is a diagram presenting 'correlation between impact of individual on society and stability level of society' (p. 78). It short, Grinin demonstrates how to avoid 'empty speculations' in a field in which such speculations have taken place very often.

One should also accept Grinin's decision to continue these intellectual traditions which have viewed human history as a 'game with Nature' – just for physical/biological survival (and also for well-being). Games of this sort have been played by all biological species. The specificity of the game we have played consists in the using of tools (technologies), in their growing complexity *etc.* Therefore, assuming the development of production forces as the starting point for modelling ('very long': from the beginning to our times) world history is not but one possibility of many: it is, in my opinion, just obvious decision. The problem is not whether this development has played the central role in human history. The problem is how to describe it, how to account for its various characteristics *etc.* And here we find in Grinin's books a number of interesting proposals: starting from formulation of six rules for developing a periodization of history (p. 16), through singling out four 'production principles' (hunter-gathering, craft-agrarian, industrial, and information-scientific) (p. 20), distinguishing three/six phases to be found in each 'production principle cycle' (pp. 24–25), to a detailed discussion of each of these 'principles' (pp. 26–35). But most interesting is an attempt at a mathematical analysis of the development of 'production principles': Grinin presents here estimations of the temporal length of the phases of this development; these analyses ends with a 'hyperbolic model of historical process development' (p. 44).

We sometime speak about 'animal societies'. And, I think, we have good reasons for that. But the differences between human society and those of all other species are great. One of the most important is the following: the organization of human societies has been undergoing immense changes. The most important form of organization of human society is called a 'state'. And just the state is the subject of Grinin's discussion in Chapter 3. Its two elements are, in my opinion, of particular interest. First, it is the debate with the model of statehood evolution proposed by Henri J. M. Claessen and Peter Skalnik. Grinin claims that their two-stage model ('early state' – 'mature state') should be transformed into a three-stage model – with 'developed state' inserted between the two other. He offers a description of the differences between these stages (or – respectively – types of states) (pp. 96–98), and – separately – descriptions of each of the three types of

state (pp. 98–115). Second, the theoretical considerations are supplemented with the ‘chronological table of the formation of the developed state’ (pp. 116–120) containing 38 states and diagram presenting ‘growth of the number of developed states’ (p. 122), and analogous diagrams for ‘mature states’ (p. 128).

The book consists of two parts. The first one has been just presented. Now a few words about the second part (comprising two chapters) devoted to globalization. Its economic aspects are discussed in one chapter, the political ones – in the other. The most interesting and important contribution contained in Chapter 4 is the analysis of mechanisms of globalization in the context of the theories of economic cycles (developed by Juglar, Kondratieff, Schumpeter and others). I think that Grinin, and co-author in this chapter – Korotayev, are right suggesting that cycles are both one the important mechanisms of globalization and its manifestation. Not less interesting is the second section of this chapter in which various problems connected with global financial system are discussed. Two problems seem to be particularly interesting. One of them is the role played in global economy by financial speculation. Authors put somewhat provocative question (‘Does it have a positive side?’) and offer quite convincing argumentation in favor of a positive answer (pp. 191–194). Similarly thought-provoking character has the hypothesis about the role of financial currents as the world pension fund. Let me quote a relevant passage: ‘countries that are rich in demographic resources, but that are poor in capitals are involved ... in a process through which they participate in the support of elderly population cohorts living in the core countries’ (p. 201). The considerations of this chapter are summarized briefly and blatantly: ‘the world needs a new system of financial – economic regulation at the global scale’ (p. 206). This thesis in a natural way leads to the problematics of political aspects of globalization. Grinin formulates some theses which he himself regards (rightly, in my opinion) as rather obvious (though there are those who are skeptical): today states are less sovereign than they used to be in the past, and it is so due to their partly voluntary decisions (pp. 219–220). However, this thesis should be read together with another and complementary one: ‘sovereignty will reduce somehow... but still in some way, it will become stronger or even grow’ (p. 222). As very interesting I regard also Grinin's thesis on nationalism, which – according to him – ‘is gaining strength because states are weakening as systems’ (p. 224). The final section, titled explicitly ‘On the way to global societies’, beyond argumentation in favor of the thesis this title formulates, contains a number of more specific analyses. For instance, considerations on the historical importance of the ‘Arab Spring’ (pp. 231–234) or the role China is probably going to play in the World System (pp. 238–241), or discussion of possible scenarios of the world game for economic and political dominance (pp. 242–244), including a provocative hypothesis on the role of the USA – both changing and stable (pp. 244–245). The book ends with moderately optimistic words: ‘it will take some time when there must occur a profound turn in the elites' and peoples' outlook, and as a result, the national problems will start to be considered primarily through the prism of common interests and only after that – in the context of common (regional and world) tasks and problems’ (p. 256).

While writing this review, I tried to manifest and support my conviction that Grinin's (and Korotayev's) *Macrohistory and Globalization* is a very interesting and important book both from philosophical/scientific and practical point of view. I am also convinced that it deserves comprehensive discussion; say in a form of an international seminar/conference. It is my hope that in this or that way, in this or that place – we organize such a meeting.