# The Great Person Theory: Is It a Valid Interpretation of History?

The Great Person Theory is a 19th-century theory that seeks to explain the history of the world taking into account all the chronological events that have occurred in the world since time immemorial. It aims to establish a foundation of truth from where the society can draw its interpretations and understanding of how the world works (Plutarch., and Ian Scott-Kilvert). The theory particularly recognizes that the world we live in had evolved a long way from times when the world remained uncivilized to simple education to the current days of robust technological advancement. These changes have come at a cost to given generations and people. It has also taken the establishment of societies and that have shaped the beliefs and the ways of thinking and acting whereby social construct have risen. The entire process has taken the effort of many people and societies alike. The developments have as well taken a lot of lives to realize them and make them part of routine lives. The Great Person theory holds that these changes have taken the efforts of great individuals to shape and reshape until they became the public norms. In this paper, an evaluation is taken into consideration to establish whether it was the efforts of the great men that have shaped the society as Carlyle (1795–1881) proposes with his adamant belief in the Great Person Theory. Or the changes we experience in the community have a strong bearing on the effect of social societies as Toynbee (1889–1975) proposes. I, however, believe in the words of Carlyle that the history is just but a bibliography of great men.

While considering the past and history as a whole, a lot of the monumental moments are associated with great men and heroes that led the given changes. The Great Person Theory of 19th century proposes that the great men that were considered heroes in history using their skills and power have revolutionized the way things were done and established a whole new of operations. For instance, great men like Isaac Newton discovered gravity through simple personal means. Not only did he discover the concept, rather he went ahead to research more about it that he established the power of gravity that henceforth revolutionized scientific research. Later on, scientists adopted the idea and went on to discover a lot more that was related to the subject of gravity. Great creations were then created like the rockets, spaceships, and aircrafts among others. These creations were above the simple idea of gravity and a falling apple. Nonetheless, the discovery of the power pulling the apple to the ground and not returning upwards became the basis for studies that went on to create aircrafts and other subjects. Therefore, although Toynbee would argue that scientists made these creations and made them better with better and newer discoveries, it is apparent that according to Carlyle, Isaac Newton was the great man (Spector, Bert Alan). More so because he pioneered a notion that without his idea on it these other creations that scientists proud themselves with would have been an impossibility. Therefore, it is correct to assume that the great man theory holds the importance of history.

At the same time, it is essential to consider that these great men created a revolution by themselves whereby they believed in a certain way and worked to actualize these aspects all by themselves whereby other aspects of empowerment followed. For instance, Napoleon the great leader of France is famous the world over for his heroics. He led his army into unchartered waters and went on to fight some of the most monumental battles whereby they won although they were wounded. Other nations might have had superior armies but could not dare the French military. With his army, Napoleon became a hero in the eyes of the world by the success he brought to France. In line, with Carlyle, Napoleon was such great man, and his actions validated his stature (Plutarch., and Ian Scott-Kilvert). He went into wars courageously and won a lot of territory and wealth for France. In this line, however, Toynbee would argue that the French government was structured in a manner that it helped Napoleon in his course by offering the resources needed for the war including weapons and workforce. It could also be argued that the legislation at the time and other social groups in the country contributed immensely to this victory that is why Napoleon went on to win these battles. Others would argue that without the external support that Napoleon would not have won his battles and would remain just like any other individual in the society. Contrary, however, it was his courage, determination and heroic leadership that guaranteed France the victory in these times writing its history as it is to date (Millar, Eric George). Therefore, it is quite apparent that it was this great man that helped shape this history whereby the outside forces were only influential after the actions of the great man.

Similarly, Abraham Lincoln is among other great men that helped shape history in their heroic actions more than the society and other helping groups could have achieved. During his time as president, America was plunged into deep racial and slavery crises. He came in at a time when the whites could not let the blacks become free. The rich white masters held a lot of slaves which they used for manual power in their farms and other places. The many the slaves the more the resources a white master had to expand their riches. Nonetheless, Abraham Lincoln single-handedly worked hard to free the blacks and make them free at a time when every other power was against ending slavery. The blacks for the first time experienced a spell whereby they considered themselves equals of the white man. Although this did not last long before other measures to compromise freedom such as disenfranchisement were instituted, Lincoln created the first wave and hope that in some day the blacks would be fully liberated and slavery would become a thing of the past (Millar, Eric George). It is therefore apparent that the great men created the fundamental changes that define history.

Concluding, it is true that Toynbee’s arguments hold credit in the sense that these supporting groups rendered help in transforming history to its current status. Nonetheless, the fundamental efforts that created the energy for these changes were mainly individual efforts like FDR did to correct the incident of the Great Depression. Although there always supporting groups and energy from outside, it is agreeable that the great men sparked and worked hard to actualize changes that changed the course of history.

## Work cited

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