CHAPTER TWO
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THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF
BENNABI'S METHOD OF STUDYING
CIVILIZATION

INTRODUCTION

In the preceding chapter, an attempt was made to demonstrate certain ideas which, had they not been discussed, would have stood in the way of a comprehensive understanding of Bennabi's method. Introducing the living context in which Bennabi had developed his method put us face to face with the important themes of his thought. Certainly, the nature of his reality and characteristics of his era left their traces on his ideas and views. Therefore, it is significant to introduce his general framework that runs through the vein of all his ideas. Interestingly enough to sort out this theoretical framework in order to examine its capacities in grasping the essence of the problems of Islamic civilization. In considering this, one should admit that the starting point in any discussion pertaining to the matter of method is strictly requiring a profound understanding of the theoretical framework. First of all it is worth mentioning what dose mean a framework in the present study. Generally speaking a theoretical framework denotes "the work that
forms the frame: the skeleton or outline of anything. Frame of reference, a set of axes with reference to which the position of a point, etc., is described: the structure of standards, arising from the individual’s experience, and continually developing, to which he refers, in all cases from the simplest to the most complicated, when judging or evaluating.\footnote{1} Within the context of the framework or the frame of reference a researcher may analyze certain problems. It is a “conceptual structure to which data, ideas, etc., are related.”\footnote{2} In the present thesis a theoretical framework means the inclusive reference in which various concepts, tools and ideas are interrelatedly assembled and methodologically analyzed. It is a set of united ideas and concepts functioning as a system that can provide a general vision, which would orient the entire process of analysis. Throughout this theoretical framework, the researcher can observe the total picture of problems and discover the points of focus on the analysis. Within its content one can see the points of importance, the nature of the problems, the possible solutions and the crucial concepts of the entire work. The present chapter is meant to deal with this framework. It will introduce the main general vision of Bennabi’s method including nature of the crisis of Islamic civilization, the conditions of the renaissance and his interpretation of the movement of civilization.

I- NOTION OF THE RENAISSANCE

To start with, the concept of the renaissance represented one of the paramount themes in Bennabi’s thought. It reflected his sensitive and deep concern with the seething predicament of Islamic civilization. He was of the view that any attempt to treat the problems of Islamic society should refer to this concept which is considered as the systematic response of the Muslim community in general and the Muslim scholars in particular to the challenge of backwardness of Islamic civilization as well as its external challenges. In this respect, Bennabi argues that “if the decadence denoted an imbalance between the temporal Muslim world and the Qur’ānic thought”, the renaissance marked the efforts of the Muslim consciousness to regain its retardation over the Qur’ānic and modern scientific thought. Considering this would encounter us face to face with the two momentous dimensions of the concept of the renaissance; firstly the activities and efforts made by Muslims to elevate their awareness and thought at the level of the Qur’ān and its method of guidance. Secondly, the efforts made also to comprehend and benefit from the new human sciences in reforming the Muslim society. According to Bennabi, the renaissance aimed at resolving this problem of retardation in the Muslim mind and society as well. In another integral account,

1The usage of the term “thought” in this context is seemed to be inadequate. It can be replaced by the term “guidance”.
one could consider the renaissance as an attempt to develop an understanding of the crisis of Muslim civilization and provide proper treatments for its endurable malady. To put it in a slightly different way, the concept of the renaissance appears to be the *sui generis* of Bennabi’s entire vision, as we shall present. With regard to this, Bennabi undertook the task of revising the tendencies and ideas that had been produced under the name of the renaissance in the Muslim world.

In this respect, various trends and approaches could be differentiated. Namely: the two prominent wings of the process of reconstruction of Islamic civilization, the reformist and the modernist movement. In the context of the next analysis, an attempt is made to examine Bennabi’s diagnosis and evaluation of the movement of the renaissance and how does this concept formulate the first key toward developing an objective method in treating the problems of Muslim society. In his attempt of revising the intellectual heritage of the movement of the renaissance, Bennabi posed the following questions:

* What are the reasons for the decline of Islamic civilization?
* What is the nature of its crisis?
* How could we revive Islamic civilization?
* Which methods could we apply?

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* Which means are suitable for the present situation of Islamic society?

In an early sense, Bennabi held the view that any discussion regarding the problem of the renaissance should tackle the subject of the nature of the crisis. By his account, no solutions could be suggested to resolve the problems of the Muslim society unless we understand the nature of its crisis. Accordingly, he attempted to introduce his view concerning the different opinions that analyzed the nature of the crisis. "In order to understand his diagnosis of these phenomena, we have to refer to his method which he applied on his field of study." ¹ In line with this, two main points are crucial; firstly his way of understanding the nature of the crisis as well as the quality of the solutions it needs. Secondly, his vision of approaching the problems of Islamic civilization. In the following discussion an attempt is made to analyze the following points:

A- The nature of the crisis of Muslim civilization.

B- The vision of approaching the problem of Islamic civilization.

A- NATURE OF THE CRISIS OF THE ISLAMIC CIVILIZATION

Bennabi argues that the real crisis of Islamic civilization was not befittingly diagnosed by most of contemporary reformists and modernists as well. By his account, rendering the crisis to the lack of the material means on the one hand and to the external factors, such as the movement of colonization on the other hand, was not an adequate and effective solution to the real crisis. Thus, when we consider the issue of means as the paramount for our internal disintegration and when we consider colonization as the major cause for our external lacuna, in both cases we do not treat the essence of the crisis. According to Bennabi, the matter of means and colonization are mere symptoms that hid the fatal trauma of Islamic civilization. The matter of the truth is that many ideas and theories, which were introduced to deal with the problem of the renaissance, delineated that there was a defalcation in understanding the real nature of the crisis. That is to say, the movement\(^1\) of reform and reconstruction was not effectively entitled to determine the correct syndrome of the Muslim world, rather than treating certain partial matters that could not cure gradually the disease.

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Bennabi debates that undermining the exact internal factors will not lead to a comprehensive diagnosis of the crisis. Therefore, one should view the problem in various dimensions and in its total picture which underlines the pivotal reasons and effects. He argues that the crisis of Islamic civilization was not a mere show of certain symptoms and superficial decorations. Rather, it was rooted inside the Muslim soul and culture per se. Hence, any attempt to treat the patient throughout reducing his outburst will not solve the problem. Essentially, the crisis is undoubtedly laying inside the Muslims themselves. In their minds, hearts, souls, behaviors, cultures and relations. Bennabi asserted that “the matter is not a matter of means and instruments. Rather, it is a matter of methods and ideas”\(^1\) In other words, we have to search inside our ways of thinking, our ways of behaving and our ways of approaching the problems. To describe the crisis in a pathologic way Bennabi, asserted that it was substantial to note concerning the myths under discussion that inhibiting cause does not come from outside but from within, born of the psychology of the men, the ideas, the tastes and usage that constitute the post al-Muwahhid spirit, in a word, from their colonisibility. The latter, reflects the internal spirit that orients the Muslim personality and life. In his view, colonization was a mere mask that hid the internal chaos of the Muslim mind and soul. He stated:

"There is a historical process, which must not be overlooked if we are concerned with the essence of things rather than, their appearances. This process does not commence with colonization but with colonisibility that provokes it... Thus colonization is not the primary cause to which one may impute the bankruptcy of men and the listlessness of spirit in Muslim countries."

If this is the point of departure in analyzing the Muslim situation, then an attempt of reexamining the movement of the renaissance is extremely needed. Therefore, as Bennabi put it one should emphasize the precedence of the internal factors. In line with this, however, Bennabi did not invite us to undermine totally the influence of the external factors caused by the colonial process or other sources. Rather, he called for a balanced method that could consider the impact, not only of colonization but also of colonisibility. In his own words:

"The entire success of a method depends, in the first place, on a simultaneous consideration of these two aspects of the problem. Seeing the one without the other is to falsify the problem....So the colonized man must, despite colonisibility and colonization, find in his own milieu the fundamental rudimentary means."

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It is so far clear in the body of the above passage that the method of approaching the crisis of Islamic civilization should integrate the consideration of colonisibility and colonization as well. An author noticed in this regard that “the Algerian writer sums up under colonisibility and colonization the factors responsible for the chaos in the Muslim world. A systematic study of these two concurrent yet distinct notions and their relation to the causes of inhibitions that have hitherto paralyzed all enterprise. Modernist and reformist, would lead to the logical conclusion that for liberating oneself from an effect of colonialism, one must first get rid of its cause, that is, colonisibility.”

If this is the case of the Muslim crisis, the issue of man becomes increasingly crucial in any attempt of the reconstruction of Islamic civilization. Consequently, a further dimension of analysis emerges again to spell the importance of man in the process of the renaissance. If the Muslim society faces, in Bennabi’s term a complex of colonisibility as a psychosocial problem, then, man becomes the central theme of any social change or transformation. Indeed, Bennabi observed that we couldn’t achieve any considerable change unless we direct our efforts toward changing man himself as well as his cultural milieu. An observer noted that “the problems of the Muslim world, Bennabi insisted, are not simply problems of poverty, productivity, or efficiency which could be easily

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located in the economy, but run deep in the cultural spheres." In other words, the Muslim crisis demands a deep analysis that can go beyond a simple evaluation of the superficial situation. It is the matter of a systematic examination and critique of the entire process of the renaissance. Moreover, one should tackle the issue of man himself and his culture. This is, because any transformation, which will not take into consideration the problem of man, would be insubstantial.

In fact, the Muslim personality requires a deep reform that could remove the entire Muslim society from the stage of stagnation and the state of inertia. It is then, a problem of a comprehensive theory and a realistic method for revivification. Therefore, in Bennabi’s words, the reformists “did not treat the real malady, rather than treating the symptoms.” Thus, whilst the Muslim society degenerates, many of the activities and efforts of the renaissance hitherto do not reach the threshold of the profound problems. Broadly speaking, the renaissance lacked a methodological strategy in its activities.

Still at a general level, at this juncture, Bennabi contended that one must go beyond a simple examination of the activities in order to see the essence of the vision and project of the renaissance.

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Indeed, one should attempt to discover the deep roots and the remote causes of the crisis. In this respect, the problem posed again at the methodological level. In other words, it is a matter of the absence of a systematic orientation\(^1\) of the efforts. Hence, reexamining the activities of the renaissance de novo is the first step in Bennabi's attempt. According to him, no solutions could be succeeded in curing the Muslim society from its decadence unless a pathologic study is systematically brought out based on a scientific method that can take into consideration the entire situation. In keeping with this, Bennabi commenced his diagnosis of the nature of the crisis by denoting the general process of the evolution of the renaissance. By his account, this process could be divided into three different but integral stages:

"The stage of decline and long centuries of inertia, The stage of awakening and regaining the awareness, and the stage of the present oscillation and vacillation."\(^2\)

It is clear in the body of the above passage that the present situation of Islamic civilization has its remote causes, which traced their roots back into history. However, one can remark that Bennabi owed a great attention to the last stages of the process.

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More specifically, it is in the last stage where the Muslim world is presently facing a critical state of degeneration. Many tendencies and views failed to determine the real nature of the crisis because they did not see the entire picture of the evolution. Their failure can be seen at three levels; the level of inability of determining the precise goals of the renaissance, the level of limiting the nature of the social problems and the level of inability of determining the methods as well as the means of the renaissance.¹

Bennabi considerably stressed the significance of knowing these stages of development and examining the interrelations among them in order to see at which juncture and at what extent the Muslim personality is deteriorated. Furthermore, Bennabi asserted that some reformists were of the view that the crisis of Islamic civilization is political in nature. Whereas, some others were of the opinion that the crisis is social in nature. Thus, the former approach suggested certain political instruments to deal with the status qua. While, the latter proposed some social means and tools. For instance, Bennabi maintained that the approach of Al-Afghani was directed towards transforming the political institution. Rather than changing the post al-Muwahhid man.²

He further argues that while al-Afghani had been the promoter of the "reformist movement and remains the legendary hero of the modern epic, he was not himself a reformist in the exact sense of the term. That role was reserved for Muhammad ʿAbduh, an Egyptian Azharite. Having taken cognizance of the Muslim drama, ʿAbduh was obliged to transform it into a social problem, where as his master with his tribal and empirical spirit had seen it from a political angle." Bennabi stressed the view of ʿAbduh who knew that for realizing a considerable social reform of the Muslim society, one must first of all reform the individual. He found for this concept an important reference in the Qurʾān:

\{Verily never Will Allah change the condition Of a people until they Change it themselves (with their own soul)(13:11).\}

According to Bennabi, ʿAbduh was able to grasp the essence of the problem by referring to the question of man himself. However, he showed certain methodological weakness in determining the suitable solution for the situation. Bennabi questioned Abdou's view concerning the ways and means of transforming man?

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As he further remarked, 'Abduh stressed the importance and role of theology in reforming the soul. But the word theology became the fatality of the reformists' movement resulting in a partial deviation and devaluation of certain of its leading principles, such as the al-Salafiyyah or a return to the original purity of Islam as the "theology touches the problem of the soul only in the realm of credo or dogma. Consequently, it was not a question of teaching him a faith that he already possessed but of restoring to this its efficacy."3

It is clear so far that, Bennabi did not see a considerable progress from the side of the reformists in curing the problem of the individual and his culture. Neither politics nor theology could provide the social formula, which could bring about the state of balance to the Muslim personality and culture as well. Generally speaking, Bennabi debates that the reform movement was initially aiming at providing the Muslims with means of self-defense instead of attempting to transform the social conditions of the people and their culture.

2 It was a tendency which called the Muslims to return back to the ancestors who implemented Islam in its original form. We can include under this school movements, such as that of Muḥammad ibn Ābd al-Wahhāb, Benbādis, Muḥammad 'Abduh and Rashīd Riḍā.
In his view, for instance the writings of Arsalan, al-Kawakibi\(^1\) and Ahmad Rida had been, merely apologetic and defensive but not constructive.\(^2\) However, one should underline the fact that even though their attempts sometimes inclined to the apologetic approach one should confess that they played an important role in regaining the Islamic identity and self-consciousness in a very critical moment of the evolution of Islamic civilization. There is no doubt that the political and social factors played an important role in the Muslim life, however, Bennabi debates that there must be a deep critique of the situation. This critique should be constructive and systematic because still now “there is no a methodological analysis of the crisis. I mean the diagnostic and pathological study of the Muslim society.”\(^3\)

Obviously, many projects and ideas were produced and implemented in order to overcome the problem, but the matter of the truth is that there was a serious shortage in the method of approaching the problem of the renaissance.

In fact, as Bennabi argues that the movement of the renaissance itself did not develop a systematic method to approach its crisis and to provide solutions for the Muslim society. Reviewing the various trends and ideas in the modern history

of Muslims was, then, essential to Bennabi, "not only to realize what was at fault, but also to develop his own ideas and suggestions for regeneration."¹

B- BENNABI'S VIEW ON THE NATURE OF THE CRISIS OF ISLAMIC CIVILIZATION

According to Bennabi, the political, economic, social and educational crises in the Muslim society were mere manifestations and symptoms of the real crisis. Accordingly, any solution given to solve those symptoms will not change the worst situation of the Muslim and his society. The reason behind this failure was not related to the effectiveness of those solutions. Rather, it was because they did not treat the real malaise of Islamic society. In other words, there was a problem of fitness and adequacy in the treatment of the problem. Bennabi explained this idea by providing an example as follow. He stated that the problem of the renaissance was similar to that of a doctor who treats a case of bacterial tuberculous disease. The doctor did not treat the bacteria itself, rather than concerning himself with the outburst fever of his patient. In this case the patient will not regain his normal situation and the doctor will not be able to solve the problem. The reason of this failure is grounded in the inability of the doctor to discover the real nature of the disease and its quality. Therefore, the result does satisfy neither the patient nor the doctor. At this juncture Islamic civilization is

unable to regain hitherto its balance. An Observer has aptly stated “Bennabi concluded that despite all the changes that have occurred in the Muslim society over the last century, they do not amount to a true Arab or Muslim renaissance. For a true renaissance, such as the one experienced by fifteenth-century Europe, has to be directed primarily at reformulating the intellectual and moral life of the individual, and not to be mistaken for the cosmetic operation whose aim is to disguise the ugly face of underdevelopment, and to input a false sense of development. The Muslim renaissance begins, he held, when the Muslim personality is liberated from obstacles and yokes which prevent the ordinary individual from becoming an effective and efficient person.”¹

In fact, the renaissance is still passing through a critical stage in which many efforts and activities are done, but the result is unsatisfactory. However, much one may thereby expose that the problem of the renaissance, in Bennabi’s view, is still obstructing the Islamic society from taking off. In fact, as he put it, “all this diagnosis did not touch the real crisis. It is dealing with its symptoms.”² In other words, as Bennabi asserted that “the major problem of the reform movement lied on the lack of a methodological and scientific thinking.”³

There is no a comprehensive system of thought or a method that can orient
the goals, projects, means, techniques and steps of the transforming process of
Islamic civilization. Therefore, the central theme of the renaissance should be
related more to the issue of method, as we shall see.

It will be useful, at this point, to look at Bennabi’s understanding of the
nature of the Muslim crisis. According to him, Islamic society suffers from various
crises that we could assemble under one single concept i.e., “the civilizational
crisis.”
Therefore, the question, which forces itself in this respect, is: what is the
meaning of a civilizational crisis? Is it of political or social or cultural or economic
or educational nature? Or is it a crisis that integrates all other crises?

Let us pursue Bennabi’s method towards an understanding of the nature of
the crisis. It is significant to remark that he commenced his analysis from a very
important principle that runs through the vein of his method. He stated that “the
problem of any people, in its essence, is that of its civilization. Hence, it is not
possible for any people to comprehend and resolve its problems unless it elevates
its thought and capacities at the level of the great human matters and speculates

deeply in order to understand the factors, which construct and deconstruct the civilizations.\(^1\)

Attributing such an importance to the problem of civilization reflected the central concern\(^2\) of Bennabi. Two main ideas can generally be underlined from the above passage; firstly the problem of every group of people is related to their capacities in constructing their own civilization. Secondly, the capacity of those people in understanding the laws and patterns governing the movement of a civilization. Bennabi, in his method, was concerned with these two elements, he discussed the first one under the title of the conditions of civilization (equation of civilization) and the second one under the title of the historical movement of a civilization as we shall see in the next element of the present chapter.

In Bennabi’s view civilizational crisis, then, denotes the crisis of the entire civilization including the cultural, social, educational, political and economic problems. However, all these problems are considered as partial ingredients that contribute to the formulation of the civilizational crisis. In this respect, Bennabi asserted that the above partial problems stemmed from the human factors themselves. In other words, the civilizational crisis reflected the state of degeneration in the human soul, personality, behavior, relation and culture. By his

account, when a man loses his moral and intellectual capacities his soul and faith starts losing its social radiation and efficacy. Therefore, his behavior and action in reality becomes increasingly destructive. As a result, his political, economic, social and cultural life disintegrates.

It is clear so far that dealing with such social agent demands a method with certain features and capacities. Bennabi debates that civilization is an important factor\(^1\) in the development of the human life and society. Moreover, It is the appropriate criterion, which could be used to study the movement of any society and its stage of development. It appears from all indications that civilization is the scientific unit that is used in the study of history of any given society. In other words, “in civilization studies- the study of great cultural heritages- what may be called a ‘civilization’ forms the primary unit of reference”\(^2\) and analysis.

In relation to this, he directed us to the fact that the process of the renaissance in the Muslim world was not really concerned with the construction of civilization as such. Rather, it was aspiring towards approaching certain partial problems, such as colonization, self-defense and culmination of the social and economic outrageous of the people. To express it in a slightly different way, the

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vision of the movement of the renaissance was partial and unclear in many of its projects and strategies.

In line with this, Bennabi noted that the Muslim society instead of formulating its own material and social capacities, it tended to accumulate the products and objects of another civilization. This tendency of accumulation and imitation created a dangerous internal psychic in the Muslim mind and society. It directed the efforts and capacities of the Muslims toward assembling those things produced by Western civilization, instead of orienting people to utilize their own capacities which will enable them to construct their own civilization.

In this respect, Bennabi asserted that this trend of accumulation would not end with a civilization in its scientific meaning. Rather, it will lead to an insatiable civilization, which he called “a thingness civilization” Such a split between the real meaning of a systematic civilization and the falsified civilization would initiate a state of weakness and imitation within the social context. The latter, makes people enjoy gathering and accumulating the things and objects of the Western civilization aiming at constructing an Islamic civilization. This process is logically and realistically bias and impossible qualitatively and quantitatively.¹ According to him, at the qualitative level civilization cannot sell at once all its objects, the essence and the spirit of those things. That is to say, it could not sell us its spirit,

¹Zaki, Malik Bennabi, p. 75.
ideas, immanent wealth, tastes. "This untouchable collection of ideas and meanings....But objects without this essence becomes spiritless and aimless." In addition, quantitatively the level of impossibility would not be less then the previous. It is impossible to imagine this huge amount of objects produced by Western civilization and sought by Muslims. It is very difficult to own the capital and wealth that will enable us to do so.

In Bennabi's terms "if we admit this it will lead to a double impossibility. Consequently, we construct what I call 'thingness civilization' besides, creating a (state of accumulation) of those civilizational objects." Additionally, such a tendency will generate a state of inability that will lead people to imitate rather than being creative and self-oriented. In other words, this situation may lead to a state of asking about the rights, instead of doing the duties and carrying out the responsibilities. Therefore, Bennabi suggested in his method a total revision of the approach that was used to treat the problems in the Muslim world ever since the reviving process commenced. In doing so, we should take into account the general rules that govern the march of civilization. In this regard Bennabi stated that civilization could not be fabricated by a collection of imported objects. In other words, civilization should be formulated within the minds, cultures and soils of the

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2 Ibid., p. 43.
people. Unfortunately, as Bennabi argues some 1 reformists and modernists debates that we can construct a Muslim civilization by importing and buying the objects and things of other civilizations. It is senseless to think of such a process of constructing a civilization. Therefore, one must surpass this stage of thinking in order to grasp the essence of the method demanded in our real renaissance. In this respect, Bennabi noted that this disposition for accumulating “indiscriminate borrowings denounces the rudimentary aspect of the Modernist movement. Civilization is not an accumulation but a construction, an architecture.” 2 Hence, to achieve a real civilization, Muslims should shift their focus from the stage of accumulation to the phase of producing their own civilization. The matter of the fact is that, this fatal mistake of reversing the logic between a civilization and its products is situated in our erroneous understanding of civilization as such. In fact, the general principal that governs the movement of any civilization is that it is a civilization that produces its objects. Therefore, it is ridiculous to inverse this rule when we attempt to formulate a civilization from its products. 3 A short example may serve as a clarification in this respect. If one considers that objects and wealth are the premier conditions for the renaissance, then, one must concentrate all efforts on what Bennabi called the financial investment (related to the realm of objects).

However, in contrast with this Bennabi claimed that any social change or civilizing process should start from man himself or what he called the social investment (related to the realm of persons and ideas). In the following example an attempt is made to demonstrate the importance of the two types of investment. Bennabi argues that if a big city like New York is fully destroyed as a result of a hard earthquake or any other circumstance and the authorities decided to reconstruct it. In this case one will be facing a situation that imposes two main approaches in dealing with the issue. In this regard, two important questions are posed:

- Is the United States of America capable of handling the whole project of rebuilding New York based solely on its financial and material capacities?

- Or is the United States of America could achieve the same result through other instrument rather than the financial capacities?

To express the same question in a slightly different way, one can say is the United States of America capable of buying a big city like New York with its entire residential, equipment’s and infrastructure. Meanwhile, as Bennabi argues we know that the United States of America gold reserves since 1969 dose not exceed ten Trillion\textsuperscript{1}, i.e. the value of its gold cannot finance the project of rebuilding the city. As a result, we have to underline these two points:

- The financial capacities of the United States of America cannot buy a city like New York. But,

- It is capable of reconstructing hundreds of cities by its social investment. That is to say, by its man and his civilizing will and power.

What interest us in this respect, is the role of human resource and the will to act and work. Bennabi, asserted that this was precisely what occurred in Germany, after the (W.W.T), in 1945, when it was capable of reconstructing itself with all its cities, economics and the entire society by using its human resources and benefit from the civilizing will of its members. Thus, we can say that, the driving force behind the miracle was not its destroyed world of objects and things, but only it was its human resources and will of reconstruction. Further on, Bennabi added another example from the developing countries. In fact, the developing societies that base their economic progress planning on the basis of financial resources, which they do not own and they have to seek help from the capitalists who will grant them the required loan on their own conditions, face also the negative results of the financial investment. In this type of societies the basic structure of economics and the political system becomes under the control of the great power. Therefore, others command the economic and political freedom of these societies in different ways and forms.

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Therefore, one should depend on the social investment, particularly in the stage of taking off. This was the case of China, when it implemented a plan of social investment based on man, instead, of financial investment that demands financial flow. As a result, it achieved the highest status of development in a minimum period. Bennabi asserted that China put all its capacities and human resources at the disposal of the society. Therefore, it was able to substitute the existing human energy to cover the absence of the machine power even in grand projects. By all accounts, China succeeded in utilizing the theory of the social investment. Thence, it becomes pioneer of the developing countries themselves. In a strong sense, one should admit that social investment that deals with the human will and personality precedes the financial investment especially in the case of the third world.\(^1\) Japan, according to Bennabi in this regard gives another example; the Japanese\(^2\) have achieved miraculous results in a short period of time. The question then is: Why were the Japanese able to civilize their society in less than half a century? Bennabi, responded while the Muslims were busy buying modern objects and commodities, and accumulating products of western civilization, the Japanese

\(^1\) *Ibid.*, pp. 73-74,76.

\(^2\) I believe that the third world in general and the Islamic world in particular is presently witnessing a new relevant case in point that could be taken as a model for the usage of the approach of social investment and human factors in dealing with the south east Asian crisis. It is the Malaysian society which reflected the role of human will and social investment in facing Shurut of the global recession of economics as well as the condition of the civilizational transformation.
were endeavouring to construct a civilized society, and build their internal elements which would assist them to produce things and objects.¹

It is so far clear that Bennabi, tried to underline the importance of the human factors in the civilizing process. He suggested that the Islamic world could not change his economic situation or political system unless it applies a developmental plan that involves man as the driving force in the entire process. Indeed, it is advisable for the movement of the renaissance to reconsider the position and function of man in its projects and methods. From such a statement, one can underscore clearly the importance of directing the efforts of the renaissance to tackle the question of civilization by giving precedence to the human and cultural factors. Indeed, the problem of the Muslim society is to formulate a civilization using the self-existing capacities and instruments. To a large extent, however, the movement of the renaissance can benefit from the achievements and experience of other nations. Utilizing the self-resources and capacities does not mean to isolate ourselves from the current of the contemporary civilization.

Bennabi, debates that, on the contrary one should involve in the global movement of development, but taking into consideration our own cultural and social equation. By his account, Western civilization dominates in our present time over all aspects of life. Therefore, one must deal consciously and methodologically

with its issues. Bennabi admitted that the Muslims who live in the twentieth century, in the world that reflected clearly the domination of Western civilization should take into account the presence of this civilization. Indeed, it is like a historical pattern of our time.... Therefore it is useless to create barriers between our civilization and contemporary civilization. In other words, if formulating an Islamic civilization is our first target, then, we should fathom deeply the roots and philosophies of the existing civilization. In order for us to benefit from Western civilization and its achievements we should understand it. That is to say, neither is the way of confrontation nor is the way of imitation suitable for us. Rather, it is our duty to reconstruct the new man who will be able to understand and deal with all internal and external surroundings and circumstances. An observer has remarked that:

"Though the Muslim world cannot seek guidance from a Western world itself on the verse of apoplexy, Bennabi states while reviewing the evolution of the former against the background of world evolution, it cannot achieve its evolution in isolation either. For integrating itself efficaciously in the world evolution, it must know the world, know itself, and make itself known and proceed to an evaluation of its own values as well as of"

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all the values that constitute human patrimony."

In a nutshell, the movement of the renaissance should give precedence to the realm of ideas and persons or to the internal social resources. Furthermore, it should consciously deal with the world civilizations. In other words, we should formulate our own civilization taking into consideration all human surroundings.

C- TREATMENT OF THE CIVILIZATIONAL PROBLEM:

NATURE OF THE METHOD

The preceding general accounts of the nature of the Muslim crisis lead us to the following question:

What is the nature of the method could be used in treating the problems of Islamic civilization?

Indeed, Bennabi was aware of this matter and he was able to provide certain ideas regarding the nature of his method of dealing with the problem of civilization. Accordingly, he noticed that the study of a social phenomenon is difficult by nature, because of certain weaknesses in the present methods of social analysis. By his account, the complexity of social context makes the task of the

Hence, this method becomes little by little difficult and complicated, particularly in the study of civilizations composed of various and wide ranges of cultures, such as Islamic civilization that contain "many different colours, zones, and variations or of several cultures within Islamic civilization". It thus appears that civilization, as a social phenomenon should be analyzed by using a scientific method, which could grasp its comprehensive structure and function.

In fact, Bennabi "as an engineer, he was trained to utilize various scientific avenues of research, such as observation, hypothesis, development and analysis." Additionally, he was aware of the nature of the social phenomenon and the general rules that govern its function and march in a social context. He argues that this method should be comprehensive in its vision as well as realistic in its tools. He did not accept any method that fragments the analysis and limits its scope at certain partial points or considerations. According to him, the method should be impartial and able to combine various disciplines. In other words, it should "tend to discover the problem on the one hand, and to study its origin, history and reasons on the other hand." Moreover, in his method, Bennabi did not relay only on what is given by the historians of civilization, whose works are


concerned with gathering and interpreting the historical events, but he also stressed more on the psychosocial and historical-cultural analysis provided by psychologists and social scientists as we shall see in the next chapter.

It is clear so far that these two sciences are very crucial in Bennabi’s method, the reason that made many of his tools of analysis derived from their context. He argues that if civilization is a social phenomenon, logically it is concerned with man and society as well. Therefore, one should utilize the factual information provided by history as well as the facts and considerations provided by the psychosocial analysis. The rational behind this lies on the nature of this method, which requires the examination of various perspectives that, influence this phenomenon. According to him, it is the matter of discovering the entire system or pattern that govern the movement and function of civilization in human psychology and sociology as well. He debates that civilization is not a series of events, which its story is given by history. Rather, it is a complicated phenomenon, which could guide us to its essence, or perhaps it could lead us to discover its pattern. Therefore, it is a matter of a multidimensional method that can grasp the essence of the phenomenon.\(^1\) Hence, studying civilization in his method demands

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the integration of the general rules derived from history, sociology and psychology.¹

As clearly stated, his approach is an attempt to combine the tools provided by the above mentioned sciences. In considering this, Bennabi noted that he would utilize the method applied in dealing with the complicated object.² In other words, he will try to integrate the above-mentioned tools in one single system of analysis. Applying this approach, in his view, might assist in understanding the concept of civilization in its comprehensive picture that includes the views of historians, psychologists, sociologists and anthropologists.

No less important was another idea that has already been mentioned. It is related to the sources of his method and its originality. According to him, the method of studying civilization should be attached to the original sources of Islamic society. In this respect, revelation becomes a crucial element in his view. In other words, one cannot only focus on the data and facts given by the social and human sciences but necessarily one must also utilize the factual principles and rules provided by religion.

That is to denote the significance of religion in developing any method for approaching civilization in general and Islamic civilization in particular. In his view, the movement of a civilization could not be explained and understood in its deep and comprehensive meaning unless it refers to the divine sources of knowledge. The role of religion in this regard is very crucial. In fact, Bennabi’s method is based on the role of religion in generating a civilizing process in any given human society. He attempted to examine how religion affects man and society and directs them to play their role in history, as we shall see. An additional perspective is provided by Bennabi to explain the nature of his method. He stated that in the method of studying a civilization, we should combine between the study of the existing reality as well as the predicted reality. In other words, one should integrate the tangible reality with the expected destination\(^1\) of things. Obviously, Bennabi’s theoretical framework provided a dynamic scaffold for the analysis of civilization by combining between the measures given by human sciences and the measures derived from the revealed sources presented by revelation or any other man-made morals. At this point, as an explanation of the above, Bennabi preferred to provide another pivotal insight into the nature of his method. He stated that:

“One could consider the civilizational phenomenon from various points of view: from the point of view of the individual, it is above all a psychology, that is, a study of man regarded as a psycho-temporal factor of a civilization. But this civilization is the


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manifestation of a life and collective thought. From this point of view, history is a sociology, that is, the study of the conditions of development of a social group, defined not as much by its ethical or political factors as by the complex of ethical, aesthetical and technical affinities corresponding to the air, or space, of a civilization. On the other hand, this social group is not isolated, and its evolution in conditioned by certain connections with the human ensemble. From this point of view, history is a metaphysic since its perspectives, extending beyond the domain of historical causality, embraces the phenomena in their finality."

It is so far clear in the body of the above passage that there are four pivotal dimensions in his method; namely the psychological, social, historical and metaphysical dimensions. The fact of the matter is that his method demands a high level of theorization and abstraction that can integrate the considerations of the four mentioned disciplines in one system of analysis. In fact, Bennabi called this integrative approach "the civilizational method". The latter, is linkage and integrative by nature. It links the tools of various disciplines, as it will be illustrated in the next chapter.

As far as can be seen, his method of analysis assembles a set of tools from different branches of knowledge. Furthermore, he utilized two other important techniques in his method, that of analysis and that of synthesis. The former deals with the single components of the whole body of ideas and study separately its

fundamental elements. Whereas, the latter deals with the integrated parts of the whole. As a matter of fact, studying his method reflected his capacities in incorporating these two techniques in an integral system. He explained this idea in the following passage:

"So far, the methodology we have utilized has depended upon analysis, that is to say, using a theoretical approach. But it is preferable, in any work similar to this, to examine the theoretical results derived from analysis by another test of synthesis."

It is obvious in the body of the above quotation that Bennabi expressed by analysis the attempts to discover the general patterns and laws, which govern the movement of a civilization. Moreover, providing historical evidences and facts by following the development of a civilization in a given society. On the other hand, he meant by synthesis the attempt to study civilization in its actual movement. In other words, in its function and activity in the individual and social context. Therefore, he utilized history for the analysis and he used psychosocial analysis and socio-cultural analysis for the synthesis. In other words, Bennabi's method combined analysis and synthesis, as we will explore this set of ideas further in the following chapters.

II- THE ESSENTIAL EQUATION OF CIVILIZATION

It is apparent from the foregoing that Bennabi conceived the problem of civilization in its totality that emphasizes the human factors in the civilizing process. Moreover, he concentrated on the integrative method of approaching civilization in general and Islamic civilization in particular. Accordingly, it is the best moment to examine his view on the content of the civilizational method. In other words, one should analyze the essential ingredients that constitute his vision on the issue of civilization as well as the important concepts that run through the vein of his view of the reconstruction of Islamic civilization.

Usually, when the Muslim scholars discuss the issue of civilization they tend to provide certain literal and technical meanings. However, it is important to note that this concept has its roots in history not only within the Islamic context but also within the history of other civilizations, such as Western, Chinese and Indian. In the present study, an attempt is made to draw a general picture of the notion of civilization without going into details that may go afield.
A GENERAL EXPOSITION ON THE DEFINITION OF CIVILIZATION

The point the researcher trusts should be clear in this regard is the meaning of civilization.\textsuperscript{1} In a broad sense, the term “civilization” literally used to mean "Umran or what one may call human association in which people share a common life and work together to achieve their goals. In another instance, the term “civilization” is utilized to denote “a land or house inhabited, peopled, well peopled, well stoked with people and the like; in a flourishing state; in a state contrary to desolate or waste or ruined; a land colonized, cultivated or well cultivated; a house in a state of repair.”\textsuperscript{2}

The above passage underlines two important aspects of the notion of civilization, firstly the state of stabilizing or settling in a place, land or house. This stabilization is demanded in the civilizing process because it provides the basic foundations of a civilization.

\textsuperscript{1}It is worth noting that there are different utilization of the term “civilization” in the Muslim world. The Arabs have coined three integral terms for civilization, viz., Umran (human association), madaniyyah (urbanization) and tamaddun (progress or development). The Persians have coined two terms for civilization, namely, madaniyat and tamaddun. See, (J.A. Byle, A Practical dictionary of the Persian Language, (London: 1949), pp. 44-150. While, the Malays of Malaysia and Indonesia unanimously use the word Tamaddun (popularly, spelt as Tamadun) as the term for civilization. See, M.A.J Beg, Islamic and Western Concept of Civilization, Second Ed. (Kuala Lumpur: the University of Malaya Press, 1980), p. 20.

Secondly, the state of development and flourish in all aspects of life. In another definition, civilization denotes "a building, a structure, an edifice; or perhaps the act of building."\(^1\) The latter, adds another important aspects related to the civilizing process. It conceives civilization as an act or plan for action and construction. In other words, civilization can be a process of constructing a state of progress and stability in the human life.

In certain Arabic literature the term "civilization" was used to mean "presence viz.-a viz. Absence, sedentary viz.-a viz. Bedouin"\(^2\) Al-Bustani defined civilization as "an infinitive means staying in a city and opposite of Bedouin, also the inhabitant of the cities and villages."\(^3\) Moreover, the term "civilization"\(^4\) was literally used in the Western tradition to mean, "civilization is derived from the Latin word civites, which means a city, and Civis, which means the inhabitant of a city. Or Civilitis, which means civility or what, is related to the inhabitant of a city. Or used to mean a citizen."\(^5\)

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\(^1\) Lane, *An Arabic Lexicon*, p. 2156.


To sum up, the term “civilization” in its literal meaning has various indications. The most relevant definitions to our analysis are stabilizing in a land, constructing a state of development, presence viz. -a viz. absence and staying in a city. All these connotations could be seen in Bennabi’s analysis of this concept. However, it is obvious in his writing that he was not concerned with the literal meaning, rather than viewing civilization as a process or a project to achieve certain level of moral and material balance and development. On the other hand, the term “civilization” in its technical definition has various meanings depending on the background of the researchers and scholars as well as on their social living context. For instance, sociologists, psychologists, anthropologists and historians used to define civilization in different ways with respect to their area of specialization. In a broad sense, the term “civilization” means, as Ibn Khaldun¹ put it, “the necessary character of human social organization.”² In this way, the term underlines the social dimension of the civilizing process, it focuses on the human characters and qualities. In other words, civilization is a state of human development and organization, which reflects certain kind of personality and human gathering that function as a systematic body to achieve certain objectives.

¹Ibn Khaldūn (1332-1406). He was born in Tunisia. He is considered to be the pioneer of sociology and human association.
Taylor who defined civilization as a "degree of fairly advanced culture, in which the arts and sciences, as well as political life are well developed, provides an additional perspective. V. Gordon Childe sees the essential characteristics of civilization as internal social hierarchies, specialization, cities and large populations and the growth of mathematics and writings."1 Another author defined civilization as "a well-established, complex society. Crucial characteristics of a civilization would include the emergence of towns and cities; an increasingly specialized division of labor; and the development of trade, manufacture, and commerce, and centers of local and national political and legal administration, systems of communication, literacy, and an elite culture of artistic and religious expression."2 It is clear so far that the notion of civilization has to do with human accomplishments in various aspects of life. Furthermore, it has social, psychological and cultural dimensions. On the basis of this general exposition, the researcher then attempts to draw a sketch conveying some concepts of what does civilization mean in Bennabi’s view.

B. BENNABI’S DEFINITION OF CIVILIZATION

To commence with, Bennabi used the term “civilization” in different ways and contexts. On the whole, he provided an important set of ideas and meanings that can assist in analyzing his view of civilization. However, one should mention that, without ever saying so clearly and openly, Bennabi provided a literal definition of civilization.

He used the term in its literal meaning to denote presence viz.-a-viz. obscene and Bedouin viz.-a-viz. sedentary. Furthermore, he used the term “civilization” to denote witness¹ before other nations and the love of knowing what is happening in the world. All these exertions are closely related to the technical meaning which concerning us in this respect. In substantive terms, civilization could be analyzed from various angles. It contains several integral dimensions that vary based on the point of focus. In this respect, one can differentiate at least between two types of definitions, the psycho-historical and the socio-cultural definition. Before proceeding, it is interestingly enough to mention few of Bennabi’s general definitions of civilization. In fact, he first used the term to indicate the balance between the moral and material aspects in the human life.

By his account, civilization cannot progress harmoniously unless it stands on the two important poles; that of the moral aspects and that of the material aspects. He argues, as many other scholars, civilization demands the equilibrium between the spiritual and the quantitative and between finality and causality.\(^1\) In another dimension, he stressed that civilization is not a pile of different kinds of objects. Rather, it is a harmonious whole of things and ideas in their various relations, uses peculiar means and circumscribed places.\(^2\) That is to say, posing the question of a civilization demands certain levels of understanding of its systematic nature and its integral parts that function as a whole. On the other hand, he defined civilization as a kind of self-force that annihilates the primitive features within the individual and social context.\(^3\) In other words, it is a kind of a psychological and mental force that organizes the human capacity as well as the human vital energy and orient it in order to respond to the needs of the social development. Here is, civilization becomes a self-character and a self-potency that helps man to control his behavior and energy and directs it towards the benefit of his society. Furthermore, he debates that civilization is in its essence “an idea….and a project for a systematic work. It is aspiring towards activating the social capacities in order to face the crucial problems of a society.”\(^4\)

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Taken together, those definitions could assist in determining the crucial elements demanded in the civilizing process. From the first definition one could see that civilization needs the balance between the moral and material aspects, accordingly from the second definition civilization appears to be in need for systematization and planning. Moreover, the third definition explains the essence of civilization as an idea and a project for accomplishing certain missions in a given time and space.

It is clear in the body of the above analysis that civilization is mainly a social phenomenon that requires human consciousness and awareness. The above definitions help us to see more precisely something which so far has been stated mainly in general terms. However, being now on the threshold of examining the conceptual meaning of civilization, one should start demonstrating Bennabi’s functional definition. A much revealing passage related to his view of civilization shows us Bennabi at his sociological thought. He stated that civilization is “the total result of the moral and material conditions which grant a given society the possibility to offer each one of its members, in every stage of his existence from childhood till afterlife, with necessary social assistance requested for his growth in this stage or in the other.” Accordingly, and as made very clear in the above definition, civilization in the true sense, is a social dynamic force which plays an important role in developing the individual and society as well. It is clear that

civilization is the sum total of the moral and material aspects which indicate its human significance. However, one should admit the fact that those aspects are not provided by the individual. Rather, as Bennabi put it, they are given by a society when it commences its civilizing function. According to him, it is society that generates civilization and assists the individual to play his role in history as a civilizing factor. In line with this, one can underline how Bennabi attributes such precedence to society over man in his definition. By his account man, as an individual cannot construct a civilization. On the contrary, it is society or group that could initiate the civilizing process and put the first step in the way of its historical progress. In other words, it is society that provides the real context and aspiration for the human activities in the realm of history. Indeed, it constitutes the progressive milieu that helps the individual to carry out his responsibilities in the form of a mission. Therefore, one might almost suggest that society is the central force on any civilizing process, it allows the individual to possess the necessities that he needs in his progress. However, the individual can only contribute on the development of his society if he is interfused in the social movement and he becomes an active agent in this integral body. In this context man can utilize his capacity and intelligence to develop himself and his community.

To put in a slightly different way, if the society is very important in the civilizing process, then, the individual also holds a crucial role in this regard. But his role is dependent on the level of his sociability and integrality that determines
his position and function in the entire movement of human development. That is to say, civilization is the component which links society and individual in an interactional integrative single body that pushes society towards a state of stability and growth. To sum up “the relation between the individual and society has been regulated in such a manner that neither the personality of the individual suffers any diminution or corrosion...nor is he allowed to exceed his bounds to such an extent as to become harmful to the community...In Islam, the purpose of an individual’s life is the same as that of the life of the community, namely, the execution and enforcement of Divine law and the acquisition of God’s pleasure.”

In the other leading factor, Bennabi argues that the moral and material factors are very crucial in creating the balance and liveliness in the human society and generating solidarity among its members. Furthermore, those sum total moral and material conditions aim at providing the social services for the people. That is why Bennabi did not only concentrate on the products and objects of a civilization, but initially he focused on the moral aspects that come first on the scale of the civilizing values. Therefore, if civilization does not provide these two kinds of assistance and specifically the moral one it will be unable to create the civilizing milieu.

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In addition to insisting on the functional dimensions of civilization, Bennabi in another instance put us face to face with another aspect, which fixes the social essence of this phenomenon. By his account, civilization means that the human being learns how to live within a group and acquires at the same time the essential importance of the social relations network in organizing human capacities for the purpose of performing its historical function. From the above and similar crucial passages, it is quite clear that according to Bennabi civilization in its essence represents the social relations web that creates solidarity among the members of society. In addition to this notion he stressed the socio-intellectual dimension of civilization. In his opinion civilization is:

"The product of a substantial idea, which inspires to a pre-civilized society the vital drive that, penetrates it onto the historical movement. Thus, the society constructs its intellectual system in conformity with the original pattern of its civilization. It is rooted in an original cultural ambiance, which will decide all its characteristics viz. a-viz other cultures and civilizations."

In the body of the above paragraph, Bennabi underscored the significance of ideas in formulating a civilization. Indeed, ideas are the social agents which provide for a society its intellectual characteristics, cultural originality and social

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2 Further discussion on this point will be provided in the next chapter.  
vitality. Indeed, ideas are the premier factors, which drive society into the threshold of history; they assist it to accomplish its mission and to carry out its responsibilities in a given historical moment. Moreover, ideas enable the members of the society to play their roles in the civilizing process. In other words, it is the ability to perform a function or a given mission by a given group of individuals. From these dense and often convoluted definitions, one may note the importance of the linkage or integrative approach in dealing with the concept of civilization. It is so far obvious that civilization appears to be like a diffuse concept, but it enables us to reconcile its integral parts in order to constitute its entire dynamic structure. In a nutshell, the definition of civilization in Bennabi’s thought demands an integrative approach that can examine all its dimensions. Many disciplines are required to analyze civilization as a social phenomenon. Bennabi utilized various tools in his method taking into account the possibility of benefiting from several sciences as one shall analyze in the next chapter.

C- INGREDIENTS OF THE EQUATION OF CIVILIZATION

It will be useful, at this point to look at the concept of the civilizational equation. It was previously stated that the objects or commodities of another one couldn’t construct civilization. Therefore, we should return to the position of asking. Is it possible for a given society to build its civilization with its own

\(^1\text{Ibid.}, \text{p. 42.}\)
capacities? If this so, what are the essential elements that can assist in the formulation of a civilization?

In fact, Bennabi was aware of these questions. According to him, every human society in its initial stage did not possess sophisticated and developed objects and means. Rather, it has a simple realm of objects similar to that of the pre-Islamic society. However, every society has an original wealth that represents its social capital in all its stages of development. This natural wealth is the driving force that allows every society to commence its civilizing process and to construct its civilization. Bennabi, debates that this wealth consists of three important ingredients namely; man, soil and time. In addition to another ingredient which synthesizes these elements in the form of a civilization, that is Religion or the moral principle. Bennabi’ stated that “in these three elements lie the social wealth of any society and these are the factors which drive it onto history”[^1] Accordingly, civilization is the result of man plus soil plus time. If one puts these elements in the form of a mathematical equation it will be as follows:

\[
\text{Civilization} = \text{Man} + \text{Soil} + \text{Time}.
\]

It is so far clear that all ingredients of this equation are, in a sense, raw material or original sources that every human society possess. A positive interaction of these preliminary elements could generate a civilizing process that

can assist society to develop. To clarify this equation, one can take any human product or object and examine its essential ingredients. In the final analysis any product involves a process that contains the three elements of civilization. It needs a man, a material taken from the soil and an interval of time. Now, if we take the entire objects of a civilization, we will notice that they are the sum total of man plus the sum total of soil plus the sum total of time spent in the processes. Thus, if one wants to have products and objects, one cannot borrow or buy them from other civilizations. Rather, one should solve the equation of civilization. That is to say, one should synthesize man, soil and time in a transforming process. In Bennabi view, when we attempt to plan for constructing a civilization, it is not our obligation to think of its products and objects. Rather, we should think of its fundamental equation i.e., man, soil and time. At the moment we resolve scientifically these three problems, by constructing human personality, exploiting human soil and benefiting from time, then, one can think of a civilization that can provide for us the necessary social services and assistance which we need in our progress.

Furthermore, Bennabi, argues that it was supposed that the Muslim world, ever since its first days of the renaissance should pose its problems at this civilizational level and not at the level of the partial problems. Unfortunately, the

\[A \text{ civilization is an embodiment of its total spiritual and material culture. It is an open, and to some extent, self-perpetuating interchange between man, the values and norms inherent}\]
civilizational level and not at the level of the partial problems. Unfortunately, the matter of the fact reflected at what extent the reformists and modernists undermined the essential elements of civilization and focused more on the symptoms. Bennabi asserted, it was assumed that our efforts and activities would tackle the equation of civilization in order to construct a new man, to exploit our soil and to benefit from our time. On the contrary, our vital energy was spent at “the level of products and objects.” Subsequently, the Muslim society is unable to solve its crucial matters. Therefore, any attempt to civilize it should commence from what Bennabi called the equation of civilization, which consists of the following problems:

“Problem of man by determining the conditions of his accordance with the pattern of history, problem of soil by limiting the conditions of exploiting it in the civilizing process and problem of time by disseminating its meaning in the spirit of the society and in the soul of the individual.”

Moreover, Bennabi debates that these three elements are the original values that God (S.W.T.) provided for any people as a social wealth. He considered, that “the three substantial values: man, soil and time, are the essential impute in the time of hardship and while these values are owned by people they

undoubtedly posses the key for their development.”

However, an important question could be posed in this regard. If every society has these three values: man, soil and time why many of them are still uncivilized? And precisely why the present Islamic society is still degenerating? As a matter of fact, our society has those values, but it passes through a long period of backwardness viz.-a-viz. other societies. Consciously, Bennabi discussed this matter and maintained that these three elements cannot work separately. By his account, there must be a religious idea or a moral principle that can synthesize them in the form of a civilization. This is what he called the catalyst of a civilization. He asserted that this is the:

“Coefficient which influence the process of composing and synthesizing the other three elements with each other in order to formulate a civilization. As it is shown in the analysis, the Catalyser is eventually existing. It is the religious idea that followed the process of constructing civilization in history.”

Bennabi further argues that the relations among these three elements of civilization are not simply additive, but interactive. Hence, similar to all interactive relations, one may find in nature the interaction of these three elements in contingent on the presence of a stimulus whose main function is to facilitate and accelerate the interaction. If one looks in the laboratory of history, Bennabi

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argues, "one will find clearly that all civilizations have their roots in religious sentiments". For history will tell us that the Buddhist civilization has its roots in Buddhism, Islamic civilization in Islam and western civilization in Christianity." Obviously, religion is the pivotal catalyst in Bennabi’s method. By his account, the three values of a civilization cannot be organized and directed toward their civilizing process unless the religious coefficient involves in the process. Those elements: man, soil and time, do not work in a separated or isolated form, but within a harmonious synthesis by which the civilized society possesses its will and power. Subsequently, "the problem of this harmonious synthesis becomes crucial". Indeed, it is a matter of understanding the function of religion in the social context. According to Bennabi, the importance of religion is not only related to the self-characteristics of its individuals but essentially to its social role as a catalyst of the human energies and capacities. He described its function in the following passage:

"The social role of religion is here essentially that of a catalyseur, favoring the transformation of values that pass from a natural to a psycho-temporal state, corresponding to a certain stage of civilization. This transformation turns the biological man into a sociological entity; time-simple chronological duration

evaluated in hours that pass into sociological time, evaluated in hours of labor, and soil-yielding unilaterally and unconditionally the nourishment for man according to a simple process of consumption—into a technically equipped and conditioned terrain for catering to the multiple needs of social life according to the conditions of a process of production. Religion is then catalyseur of the social values.”

In a nutshell, any civilizational movement aspiring towards constructing a civilization, such as the movement of the renaissance needs an initial capital and wealth which composes of man, soil and time. In addition to the religious idea or the moral principle that can synthesize these elements. At this point, however, one may return to the position of asking about Bennabi’s opinion of the previous ingredients. In other words, how does he determine the position and function of the four elements in the course of a civilizing process? It would have been useful to analyze separately each of the essential ingredients of the equation of civilization to examine their usage on his method of studying civilization.

1- MAN AND CIVILIZATIONAL TRANSFORMATION

Obviously, the previous elements are of importance in any civilizational movement. However, Bennabi reserved an exceptional position for the issue of

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man per se. By his account, man is the primary social stratagem and device because he is the central force in any civilizing process. He asserted that man is "the fundamental condition of all civilizations and civilizations constantly fixes the human condition." That is to say, the first matter of concern on the civilizing process is man because history introduced to our clear view how civilization is the work of people themselves. It is man, at the final account, who determines the social value of the civilizational equation, because "soil and time could not achieve any, if we lay on them only, social or civilizational transformation." Before one proceeds further, it is worth demonstrating the general meaning of the concept of man in the Islamic world view. In fact, the term "Insan" is repeated many times in the Qur'an and the Sunnah of the Prophet (S.A.W.). It is used in different contexts to explain various situations and states of the human existence and development. Starting from the pre-birth stage of man till his post-death stage revelation provides information and facts regarding his life and death not only as an individual but also as a family, group, society and nation. The most important dimensions of man, which are related to our present discussion, can be seen in the nature, mission and responsibility of man in the universe. Many verses of the

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Qur'an serve as explanations of the above meanings. Allah says in the Holly Qur'an:

{We did indeed offer The Trust to the Heavens and the Earth, and the Mountains, But they refused to undertake it, Being afraid thereof: But man undertook it- He was indeed unjust and foolish.} (33:72).

It is obvious that this verse comprises a very deep insight on the freedom of man and his will to bear the trustee. Trustee is "to hand over trusts to those to whom they belongs. The word "trusts" here has a very wide sense and refers to all responsibilities that devolve upon an individual, a group of people or a nation, whether they are religious, ethical, legal, or political in nature...Here amanah stands for voluntary obedience to God.\(^1\) Another verse emphasizes the human will and self-responsibility:

{Namely, that no bearer of burdens can bear The burden of another (39) That man can have nothing but what he strives for.\} (53:38-39).

It is the heavy responsibility\(^1\) of man on this earth. He is created and fashioned in a well-organized plan to be the servant of God and His vicegerent. Allah (S.W.T.) says:

\[\text{I have only created Jinns and men, that they may serve Me} (51:56).\]

It is in fact, the matter of worship and submission to Allah (S.W.T.). This submission implies another important concept, which is introduced in the following verse:

\[\text{He who created death and life, that He may try which of you is best in deed; and He is the Exalted in Might, of Forgiving.} (67:2).\]

Indeed, \textit{ibtila'} is the most significant criterion which makes distinction between the good man and the bad man. "According to the Qur’an, life is a trail more accurately, a series of trails. The very purpose of the creation of the heavens and the earth is described as putting man to the test (11:7) and the same purpose is attributed to the creation of life and death (67:2)."\(^2\)

\(^1\)In the broader Qur’\'anic context man was created in order to be put to the test-(in order that He may try you and find out which of you perform good actions)(67:2). As God’s vicegerent, then, man’s position is one of privileges and responsibilities both: on the one hand he enjoys the freedom of choice and action, on the other hand he is supposed to make responsible use of that freedom. See. Mir, \textit{Dictionary of Qur’\'anic Terms}, Op. cit., pp. 35-36.

\(^2\)\textit{Ibid.}, p. 204.
It is so far clear, that Islam conceives man as an important creature with various faculties and capacities. “Man is the best creation of Allah because Allah invested him reason, a spark of divine spirit, and fortified him with requisite capabilities, knowledge and wisdom, language and fine expression. Then, he appointed man as His vicegerent, and for that reason, made everything in the universe subservient, and sufficient to him”\(^1\) The matter of the truth, is that man as a vicegerent should properly use his will and intention. “In the logic of the Qur’ān human beings enjoy all potential perfection and they should direct themselves to bring these inclinations to the stage of action. It is they, therefore, who have to develop themselves. The general condition for the attainment of such human perfection is faith. Faith is the basic step toward piety, correct deeds and endeavors in the way of Allah”\(^2\) In fact within this context, the Qur’ān provides all motivation and means of man’s development and empowerment. “It also provides the spiritual motivation for involvement in all efforts aimed at amelioration of the human condition. The Qur’ānic doctrine of man as Allah’s Trustee (Khalifah) who, equipped with the divine gift to the faculty of reason, is entrusted with the proper utilization and management of the Allah-given resources of nature made subservient to man, provides the strongest scriptural support for any human


endeavour to rise living standards.”¹ On the basis of the above general exposition, an analysis of Bennabi’s view of man seemed relevant. In fact, he differentiated between two types of man; the integral man and the dissolved man. According to him, history or civilization, “commences with the integral man, constantly adapting his effort to his ideal and needs, and accomplishing in society his double mission of actor and witness. But history ends with disintegrated man, the corpuscle deprived of the center of gravitation, the individual living in a dissolved society that no longer furnishes his existence with either moral or material base.”²

It is obvious that civilization does not commence wherever or whenever people meet and assemble in a given place or time. Rather, it starts with a man who is prepared to perform his civilizational responsibilities. That is to say, the man who is ready to thrust onto a civilizing process and act as a driving force of the social transformation. In fact, Allah (S.W.T.) has created man in the best of shape, but human conditions and social surroundings influence his personality, life and civilizational destination. According to Bennabi, man as a prior condition for civilization has two values; the first one is raw and elementary and the second one is conditioned and formulated within the social context. The first exists in every human being in his biological structure and it is represented by his original preparedness to utilize his intelligence, soil and time. While, the second value is

the one, which he gains from his social milieu. It is represented in the means and experiences that the individual could find in his social ambiance in order to develop his personality and capacity of understanding life as well as coping with the demands of a civilizing process. In the following passage, Bennabi described the difference between the two types of man:

"The basic unit of a society is not the elementary individual; but it is the (conditioned individual). In fact, nature provides the individual in a rude state. Then the society reformulates him in conformity with its specific objectives. This is the meaning that is clearly demonstrated by the Prophet (S.A.W.) in this tradition: (every child is born on the fitrah and it is his parents who make him a Jew, a Christian, or a Magian)."\(^1\)

It is clearly stated here that transforming man of civilization demands certain changes in his personality and thought. Qualifying man to play his role in history requires such a profound change in his social surroundings. Indeed, Bennabi stressed in his method, that the role of the transformed man in history is to construct a social context that would allow the members of the society to enjoy the fruits of their civilization. Therefore, the real civilizing process should aim at formulating this man. Furthermore, he argues that the problem of any civilization

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is substantially related to the human agent. Thus, any thinking in the problem of man is thinking in the problem of a civilization.¹

Moreover, Bennabi debates that man acts not only in terms of temporality, of his material needs, but also "in terms of his psychism, of his spirituality. Therein lies the complete reality of man which must take into account for seizing it in its totality."² This is the complete picture, which Bennabi draws for a man of civilization. Accordingly, when he dealt with the problem of Islamic civilization he aspired towards directing our attention to this kind of historical man. Our crucial need, Bennabi explained, is in the world of soul and not in the world of objects. "Our dire need is a man, a civilized man."³

3- SOIL AND THE SOCIAL COMMODITIES

To start with lets find out the meaning attached to the word *al-Turab*. The term *al-Turāb* or "soil" is itself "a noun, which means: dust, earth, ground and soils altogether. While *ard* stands for; earthy, soil, land and ground or more specifically surface of the earth."⁴ In addition, it means, "to have much earth, to

hold in the land.” On the other hand, many verses in the Holly Qur’an refers to the term “soil” in different contexts. However, one may emphasize the fact that this term is often used to denote one of the ingredient which involves in the composition of man as well as earth in which he lives and dies. Allah (S.W.T.) states:

\{O mankind! If ye have a doubt about the resurrection, (Consider) that We created you out of dust\}(22:5).

\{Among His Signs is this, That He created you From dust; and then, Behold, ye man Scattered (far and wide)!\}(30: 20).

\{What! When we die, And become dust and bones, shall we (then) be Raised up (again)\}(37:16).

It is so far clear that the term “soil” and its derivations are utilized to denote the earthly side of man. It is on the one hand, the material part of his creation and on the other hand represents the main source of his objects and commodities in this life. In fact, Bennabi’s view of the term “soil” shows that his concern was more on its social and functional dimensions. After all, it is worth mentioning that Bennabi preferred the term “soil” instead of matter or object because of some reasons; firstly the term “matter” stands in the field of ethics as the opposite of term “spirit”. Therefore, it may cause certain confuse when we use

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it in the equation of civilization. Secondly, it comes in the field of sciences as the opposite of the term “energy” and this may also create some kind of misinterpretation that can deviate its real usage in the equation. Thirdly, in philosophy the term “matter” comes as an opposite of the term “idealism.” Bennabi argues that all these connotations may cause confuse and lead to some sorts of philosophical and natural discussions, which may not allow us to utilize the term in its proper civilizational context. On the basis of these arguments Bennabi selected the term “soil” instead of the previous terms because of its stable and simple meaning. Accordingly, he used the term in its socio-political meaning as a relation between an owner and a user and in its technical meaning as a source for certain means and things of social significance in the life of people.

On the other hand, one should note that Bennabi did not discuss the element of soil in its bio-chemical nature and characteristics. Rather, he used it in its social meaning; soil has a social value, which is ready to provide for people the things and commodities as social services and grantees. Hence, the value of soil is related to the value and position of people themselves. Bennabi asserted that if the owners of the soil are civilized and developed their soil will be important and effective in serving the needs of the people and vice versa, if the people are in

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1Bennabi, *Shu'uf*, p. 45.
backwardness the soil will not be effective and active. Moreover, he argues that the starting point of any social reform depends on the effectiveness of soil, which would provide for the members of the society the necessities required in any stage of their development. That is to say, any human society demands certain preliminary necessities that enable the people to carry out their biological and social activities. If the soil is incapable of offering these necessities, this is an indication that these people are still unable to interact with the social conditions, which will help them to invest their soil.

In line with this, one should differentiate between soil as a ready-made bestows of God for the benefit of the people and soil as a civilizational element that requires planning and orientation. The latter, denotes the responsibility of the society in orienting the human resources in order to exploit soil for the benefit of the society. In addition, the orientation of soil should aim at preserving the wealth and resources of the society.

Bennabi strongly stressed the importance of preserving the reforestation and the greenery of the earth. He was disappointed of various Muslim countries, which did not take the problem of soil into account as one of the important factors of the civilizing process. Those countries, Bennabi cited, "are under the grip of

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destratification because of the lack of tree planting and reforestation of the land.”

Accordingly, as Professor Kamal Hassan has aptly noted Bennabi’s “concern for the environment of North Africa was prophetic and, in this case, was also pioneering as an environmentalist. He warns that a great ecological disaster is awaiting the world due to large-scale logging and the saharisation ‘invasion of the desert’. The ensuing erosion will affect the economy of the people and food will be scarce.” In a nutshell, the problem of soil is one of the challenges that faces the society, which aims at constructing its civilization. The civilizing process of a society cannot be achieved if the people do not solve the problem of soil. Activating soil means orienting it to play its social role in the movement of a civilization.

3- TIME AND ITS CIVILIZATIONAL VALUE

The third element in his equation of civilization is time. Bennabi argues that time has a crucial significance in any civilizing process. It is a value, which is owned by every human being and every human society. However, one should also differentiate between time as a raw and natural value and time as a social value that enters in the civilizing process. According to Bennabi, time should be conceived as a civilizational factor in our activities and actions. Indeed, in certain

1 Bennabi, Shurüf, pp. 135-136.
stages of the social development time becomes "the substance of life which is inestimable." In a broad sense, the term "time" means a "period of time measured in units (years, months, hours, etc.). Also point of period of time used, available or suitable for something." Literally, the word "time" "derived from the term "Dahr" which means long time, age, epoch, lifetime, eternity, fate, destiny." From an Islamic point of view the word "time" is an important concept that runs through the vein of the entire human life not only in the present world but in its continuity after death. The Qur'an expresses this point in the following verse:

{And they say: "what is there but our life in this world? We shall die and we live, and nothing but time and destroy us. "but of that they have no knowledge they merely conjecture! (45: 24).

Our present time is a mere instance and passage that will end when the order of Allah (S.W.T.) is decreed. Indeed, it is a very limited experience where

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men are tested and they shall return back for Judgment. The Qur'an introduces the
idea of the limited human time\(^1\) in the following verse:

\[
\text{(He it is Who created you from clay, and then decreed a stated term (for you). And there is in His presence another determined term; yet ye doubt within yourselves!)} (6: 2).
\]

It is so far clear that our present time represents a period of probation and
after that comes the Day of Judgment in which the deeds and works of people will
be introduced in front of God for accountability. This meaning of time is best
demonstrated in the following saying of the Prophet (S.A.W.) which is quoted in
the following paragraph:

"Nobody will be excused on the Day of Judgment until he has answered for his
actions about the following four aspects of life; 1. His age: How did he spend it wing? 2. His youth: what did he do during it? 3. His health: How did he earn and spend? 4. His knowledge: what use he made of it?" It is obvious from this passage that time has a
social significance which involves in the process of human development in the above
mentioned aspects; age, youth, health and knowledge. Further more, time is the
"framework for human self-fulfillment and

\(^1\)The appointed time is Ajal, or ajalun musamman, means "appointed time, fixed period
of time." In some verses the two expressions are used in a non-technical sense, as in (2:82)... As a
technical term, they refer to (a) the fixed life-span of an individual (6:128; 39:42; 40:67;
63:11), (b) the appointed time for the destruction of a wicked people (7:34; 10:49; 16:61;
29:129), or (c) the unalterable time appointed by God for the bringing about of the hereafter.
social development at the spiritual, moral, mental and material levels."

On the basis of the above analysis, one may study Bennabi's view of time. According to him, it should be clear that time enters into the civilizational\(^2\) equation as a social factor that enables people to value the importance of dividing labor based on hours, minutes and seconds. When people reach this level of awareness about the division of labor, time becomes a civilizational factor, which provides for every member of the society the atmosphere to play his role in history. In other words, "time is not separated from the substance of social activities."

Bennabi asserted, that "life and history of people are influenced by the concept of time"\(^4\) Therefore, one has to invest time and use it effectively to produce things and ideas, which will make our life full of glittering moments, that will reflect the essence of our civilization. In this respect, Bennabi debates that the present Islamic society misses, in various aspects of life, this social meaning of time.

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Therefore, our time is wasted out of the civilizing activities that can create a civilizing milieu within our society. By his account, the meaning of civilizing time is missed in our life and activities. This meaning which we do not possess yet, "is the concept of time that involves in the process of formulating idea and activity as well as in constructing the meanings and objects."\(^2\)

Recalling this importance of the notion of time requires a systematic plan of orientation. According to Bennabi, one should stress the importance of social education and its role in spreading the idea of time within the cultural and social institutions of the Muslim society. Moreover, we should teach the people the science of time that they lack in their activities. In other words, one has to teach the child, woman, man how to use time in their daily life as a duty and obligation. Bennabi stated that "as long as, every person uses a part of his daily time in performing a systematic work, at the end of the year we will find a huge amount of labor\(^3\) hours in the interest of the Islamic life in all its intellectual, moral, industrial, economic and family life\(^4\) Indeed, time influences the life of any people in all its details. As a social value, time\(^5\) formulates one of the crucial concepts of

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the equation of civilization. In fact, Bennabi debates that time should be discussed as one of the problems of civilization in the agenda of the renaissance. Bennabi argues that if time is exploited and it is not wasted astring the sum total of our intellectual, handless and spiritual labor will be elevated and that is civilization.\(^1\) In other words, this is the social meaning of time that helps any people to construct their civilization. It is inevitable for the programs of orientation of time to discuss this concept which activities the social energy and elevates the effectiveness of people when they start moving towards civilization.\(^2\)

4- RELIGION\(^3\) AS A SOCIAL CATALYSESUER OF CIVILIZATION

It is so far clear, that religion is the catalyst of the three mentioned elements of civilization. Bennabi debates that religion cannot commence its civilizational function as a civilizational catalyst unless it synthesizes man, soil and time in one single project. That is to say, it is the initial driving force that pushes the human energy to the civilized position.


\(^3\)The term “Din” “has four meanings in the Qur’an (1) Submission, as in 16:52: {To Him belongs what is in the heavens and the earth, and it is to Him that submission must always be made}. See also 39:2. (2) A system of beliefs, or, roughly, religion, as in 3:83: {Do they desire a religion other than the religion of God?}. (3) Law, as in 12:76: {It was not for him [Joseph] to detain his brother in accordance with the law of the king}. (4) Recompense, as in 51:6: {And recompense shall be meted out}. See. Mir, *Dictionary of Qur’anic Terms*, Op. cit., p. 49.
Over all, Bennabi did not mean by religion Islam per se. Rather, he included all revealed religions as well as the man-made systems of values and moralities. According to him, Hinduism and Buddhism can be considered as general systems of values, which can initiate a social action in history and conduct the human activities. Furthermore, he included any other kind of unseen worshiper or social project that can formulate a sort of commitment between man and these forces. He argues, that even a secular social project, that can gather the capacities of people around certain objectives, could be considered as a force that generates a civilizing process because it allows the first generation to put the first step and other generations continue the project until its final stage.¹

It is obvious that he conceived religion in its broad sense, however, it is of merit to note that he considered Islam as the most pivotal religion that could construct a civilization in its social profound meaning. In another instance, Bennabi debates that, religion may denote any kind of relation between a human being and other power of divine nature or of social nature. However, according to him there is a difference between the revealed religion and the non-revealed religion, particularly in its originality and method. The revealed one is very systematic and it comes originally with the Messengers and Prophets, in addition, to its divine method of guidance. A prominent Muslim scholar state that “here religion delivers its greatest message, whose burdens cannot be carried except by

it, and whose constructive objectives and well-guided goals cannot be realized except on its bases and principles. Thus religion ties together the moral criterion which it lays down for people and self-love which is centered in their nature."¹

Whereas, the non-revealed religion is different because of its human sources and its man-made method. In line with this, Bennabi asserted that:

"The non-religion morality, as much as it makes sense, analyzes human action on its immediate personal interest. The secular system is based on this fact. Certainly, the personal interest is also reckoned in the monotheistic ethics but here it is more altruistic. In fact, it is viewed as a merit of an individual, rather than his benefit."²

On the other hand, he explained how does religion play a significant role in the movement of any historical civilization. In this respect, it is significant enough to underline the social function of religion. Bennabi asserted that almost all human civilizations are rooted in a religious context or at least this context constitute the initial force that drives a society onto history. In the following pivotal text Bennabi explained his view:

"As far back as we look into the past history of man either into the most beautiful periods of his civilization or into the most

rudimentary stages of his social evolution, we always find there a trace of religious thought. Archeology has always revealed, among the vestiges, which it brings to light, the remnants of monuments which were consecrated to some cult by the ancients. For the simple dolmen to the most imposing temple, architecture has evolved on a par with religious thought, which also included the laws and even the science of man. Besides, civilizations were born in the shadow of temples, such as that of Soloman, or that of the Kaaba. Thus, it was from these places that civilization radiated out to illuminate the world to brighten its universities and laboratories and to enlighten in particular, the political debates in parliaments. The laws of modern nation are essentially canonical. As for their civil laws, there is not least of religious essence in France, particularly where it was borrowed from Muslim law, customs and habits of peoples are modeled by a metaphysical preoccupation, which sends even the smallest Negro village around a small hut especially and carefully built for the more or less primitive spiritual life of the people.\footnote{Bennabi, \textit{Al-Ẓāhirah}, p. 65.}

From the above and similar passages, it is clear that Bennabi returned every civilizing process in the history of man to a religious context. According to him, every civilization started from this religious drive that pushes the society to start its historical action.
Therefore, he considered that religion was naturally inscribed itself in the origin of all human transformations\(^1\) that occurred in the history of man. For instance, even the religions; such as Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity and Islam formulated the original synthesis of man, soil and time in the crib of a religious idea.\(^2\)

Subsequently, a civilization does not commence its advent except with the emergence of a religious idea in its broad sense. Therefore, one has to search in every civilization about its religious foundations which caused its appearance in history. As a matter of fact, it is not an exaggeration to claim that we could find in Buddhism the seeds of Budic civilization and in Brahma the seeds of a Brahman civilization. Accordingly, as Bennabi debates civilization cannot appear in one of the nation except in the form of revelation, in its broad sense, which formulates a legislation and a method of conduct for people or at least its foundation is based on an idea that directs the human vital energy towards an unseen worshiper in its broad sense. "It seems that it is decreed for man that he will not see the radiation of a civilization unless he extends his horizon beyond his earthly life."\(^3\)

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According to Bennabi, Islam as a revealed religion is the most dynamic catalyst of a civilization in the history of humanity. This is a fact that is not verified only by the context and method of Islam as such, but also by the facts and patterns of history. Therefore, the Muslim society will not synthesize man, soil and time in the form of a civilization unless it returns back to the values and ethics given by the Qur'ān. Bennabi further argues that in the light of the Holy Qur'ān religion appears as a

"Cosmic phenomenon, regulating the thought and the civilization of man, as gravitation regulates the matter and conditions its evolution. Thus, the religion appears imbibed in the universal order, as the original law of the soul, which gravitates on many orbits, beginning that of Islam, up to that of the most elementary fetishism around the same center, always dazzling and ever-mysterious."

In fact, Islam was an essential component in the previous Muslim civilization. It was the initial driving-force that synthesized man, soil and time and moulded them in the form of a historical civilization. On this canvas, Islam was revealed to introduce its admirable civilization, giving to the world dominated by individualism cohesion and a sense of the collective that determined its historical orientation. Bennabi debaters that the Qur'ān transformed “the Bedouin into a

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sédentary, who left in Spain and the south of France, the evidence of an agricultural science. This fixation of man to the soil immediately produced its effect. Having attributed such an important position and role to religion, an additional perspective may lead us to the following question: What is the rational that makes religion function as a social catalyst? In other words, how could we provide a rational evidence that explains the role of religion in history and society?

III- BENNABI'S INTERPRETATION OF THE MOVEMENT OF CIVILIZATION

The last instance just demonstrated brings us face to face with the question of the movement of a civilization. Having, thus gathered few concepts and ideas of Bennabi's theoretical framework, it is the best moment to examine his understanding of the reasons that causes the civilizing process. As a matter of fact, civilization cannot commence its function in history unless a driving force comes at the pre-civilization position to provide the first push that can thrust the society onto history.

In this respect few important questions can be posed as follows:
- What is the nature of the driving force that generates the civilizing process?
- In which conditions the civilizing process commences its advent?
- What are the quality of interpretations given to explain the movement of civilization in history and society? In the context of the next element an attempt is made to shed some lights on the above questions in general and examining Bennabi's view on the interpretation of the movement of civilization.
A- BENNABI'S EVALUATION OF THE THEORIES OF CIVILIZATION

To begin with, many theories were introduced to explain the nature and cause of the movement of a civilization in history. In fact, in order for a society to start its civilizing process there must be a cause and a force that can drive its will and power to the threshold of history. According to Bennabi, the historians and social scientists appeared to be slow in developing a systematic approach to explain the movement of a civilization. He argues, that the majority of the historians starting from Thucydides until Guizot1 directed their efforts in assembling the historical events, rather than developing a systematic framework for interpreting these events.

By his account, the appearance of Guizot was the point of departure of the science of history. During this era few attempts were carried out to provide some sorts of scientific explanations.2 However, Guizot's approach showed certain kind of methodological weakness that precluded him from moulding his approach in a comprehensive system of analysis. In Bennabi view, his attempt was not developed in a way that can provide a scientific explanation for the movement of a civilization in history.

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1Guizot, Francois Pierre Guillaume (1789-1874). A French historian and politician. His major work was: *History of Civilization In Europe*.

In line with this, he argues that Ibn Khaldun was the first Muslim scholar who disentangled the pattern of the movement of a civilization. In fact, he was the first historian who developed a method for approaching the phenomenon of civilization.

Indeed, Bennabi debates it was possible for Ibn Khaldun to be the first one who could develop a method of discerning the pattern of civilization. Unfortunately, the terminology of his time stopped him at the limitations of one of the products of civilization i.e., State. Thus, we did not find in what was left by Ibn Khaldun except a theory about the evolution of the State and not civilization as such. Whilst, it was beneficial if his theory traced to us the entire picture of the development of a civilization. Then one could see a very rich wealth of ideas, instead, of what he had really contributed to the method of studying human association. Indeed, he was competent of beholding a comprehensive method for approaching civilization.¹ On the other hand, Bennabi maintained that Hegel² rendered the cause which demarcates every historical movement of a civilization to the idea of contradiction between the thesis and the anti-thesis. By his account, when motion is emerged on the basis of the contradictory context, its goals ending in the form of an infusion or synthesis. In other words, the movement of a civilization commences due to the interaction caused by three elements.

¹Bennabi, Shurūf, p. 62.
²Hegel, Goorege Wilhem Friedrich (1770-1831). He was born in Stuttgrad. His major work was: The phenomenology of The Mind).
According to Hegel, the state where a group of people situates at any given moment of history represents a thesis, this state will not last long due to the change in the economic, political or climatic conditions. Therefore, a contradictory context may cause an adjustment on the direction of the thesis, this is what Hegel called the anti-thesis. This situation would lead to certain forms of contradiction between the forces of inertia and the forces of motion.¹ In this regard, Bennabi argues that in Hegel's view, the motivating force that can create the synthesis is the final state which represents the end of the entire process. This process introduces itself whenever there is a new form of contradiction.² In line with this, Bennabi noticed that this idea of contradiction was the crucial theme that captured the attention of many contemporary scholars and schools of thought. For instance, the Marxist approach held the view that the contradictory cause that generates the advent of a civilization is of economic nature. It is clear that in this view what causes the emergence of a civilization is the economic contradiction.³ According to Bennabi, the Marxian view of history did not explain the result emerged when a society is degenerated without any change in the nature of the material aspects. For instance, the American civilization before the era of Kulambous and the Greek civilization did not disintegrate because of the change in the technical means or

²Ibid., p. 18.  
³Ibid., p. 18.
human material needs.\textsuperscript{1} Bennabi then concluded, "thus, we find in the Marxian theory a methodological shortage caused by the plethora of the explanatory in the method. This explanation that commences from a materialist premises. That is to say, from a mechanical process in approaching civilization."\textsuperscript{2} To put it in a slightly different way, the Marxian theory undermines the role of the human will and consciousness in directing the movement of a civilization as well as disregards the importance of the moral factors in the civilizing process.

Moreover, Bennabi emphatically stated that "the Marxist thought also neglects the essential notion of cycle by its assertion that the social and historical process move from the era of primitive animality to the era of abundance, consciousness and liberty, even though the finalism implied in this perspective is contradicted by the very principle of the dialectic."\textsuperscript{3} As an explanation of the above passage one may admit that "this furnishes the Marxian circle of socio-economic evolution. The society began with the communal land ownership of pre-capitalistic times, unmolested by any divisions caused by private property, it will end up with Communism, where again all property—land, money, buildings, machinery is jointly owned, thereby completing the full circle of evolution."\textsuperscript{4} To express it in a

\textsuperscript{1} Bennabi, \textit{Milād}, p. 19.
slightly distinct way, "Marx sought to explain the historical process through logical argumentation, through dialectic, a method of inquiry that he borrowed from Hegel. However, unlike Hegel, who regarded humans as sensuous beings, Marx believed in the materialistic existence of men and women. To Hegel sense-perception was the basis of all social activity, whereas to Marx the social change was rooted in material forces." On the other hand, Bennabi argues that the theory of Spengler provided another explanation to the civilizing process. By his account, every historical change is due to a genius that characterizes a given era with a considerable invention. An example of this invention can be seen in the discovery of the science of Algebra in the Islamic civilization. In this respect, Bennabi remarked that with the theory of Spengler, we found the racist spirit involved in the methods of history. This factor will latter find its complete realization between the Two World War with the attempt of Walter Schubbart. Bennabi debates that the latter developed the theory of Spenglar integrating it with that which explains civilization as a result of the genius of an era and not of a specific race.

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2 Spengler, Oswald. A German philosopher. His major work was: *The Decline of the West*.


4 Schubbart, Walter. A Baltic citizen of German origin. His major work was: Europe and the Spirit of the West.

5 Bennabi, *Shūrūt*, p. 64.
In line with this, Bennabi debates that Toynbee\(^1\) provided us with an important interpretation of the historical change. In this regard, Bennabi linked between the Marxian approach and that of Toynbee. He noticed that the gap in the Marxist view led it to stop at certain extents without any further advance. "On this ground, we can decide that, until the contrary is proven, the expansion of the Communist theory is affixed to the economic boundaries which correspond to certain geographical frontiers and that, beyond these limits, the Marxist approach has failed to cope with the conditions of its acceptance. Therefore, it cannot offer us a rational explanation that can be applied to areas where it has not spread."\(^2\) This remark assisted Bennabi in analyzing the theory of Toynbee who was able to define clearly the exact limits in which the Marxian view failed to introduce any considerable response. In his view these limits are very significant in Toynbee's approach which denotes that an obstacle of economic or technical nature in the form of challenge could push the society to respond. In his view, as Bennabi argues "the challenge impose itself on the conscience of the individual and group. The response to it is proportional to the importance and degree of stimulation it contains. Thus, there is a symmetry between the nature of the stimulation and the attitude that the human consciences takes as a response."\(^3\)

\(^1\)Toynbee, Arnold John (1889-1975). A British origin. His major work was: the 10 volumes *Study of History* (1934-1954).


\(^3\)Ibid., p. 19.
It is so far clear that the concept of challenge plays a crucial role in Toynbee’s view of history. Indeed, “the important factor is challenge which, however, should not be too severe, otherwise any response from the struggling people will be relatively weak and inadequate to overcome the formidable obstacles”1 Accordingly, if we supposes that the challenge is weak or under the required level, the response also will be weak or needless. In other words, when we have a challenge, we do not always have the kind of response that generates a civilization. The challenge may be severe that no adequate response can be made. There is, therefore, not a direct relation between challenge and response, but a linear one. “That is, a broad range of degree of difficulty can evoke an adequate response; but at the extremes—challenge that are overly weak and overly severe—adequate response is not possible. If the challenge is too severe, a civilization may be aborted or become arrested, in its development.”2 Moreover, Toynbee explained the nature of the challenge that may cause a historical action of the human group. According to him, the geographical factor is of great importance. However, he

2Reobert, Perspectives On Al-Tagıyır, p 41.
underlined other kinds, such as "hard countries\textsuperscript{1} new grounds\textsuperscript{2}, blows\textsuperscript{3}, pressures\textsuperscript{4} and penalization\textsuperscript{5}.

B- BENNABI'S VIEW OF THE CIVILIZATIONAL MOVEMENT

It is now the best moment to sort out Bennabi's view regarding the causes which generates the civilizing process. It is so far clear from the first instance just discussed that Bennabi was not satisfied with the various explanations of the civilizational movement. By his account, neither the theory of Giuzot nor the theory of Marx could provide a correct interpretation of the emergence of one of the human civilizations, such as Islamic civilization. In a mature attempt, he argues that if we apply the previous theories to explain the evolution of this civilization, they would not satisfy us.

\textsuperscript{1}Hard country means a difficult physical environment.
\textsuperscript{2}New grounds refer to land that has not been settled.
\textsuperscript{3}Blows refer to a sudden military defeat.
\textsuperscript{4}Pressures refer to a state of continuing exterior threat.
\textsuperscript{5}Penalizations refer to the races who have been a subject of colonization. See, Somervell, \textit{A Study of History}, Vol. 1-5, p. 88.
By all accounts, Islamic civilization was not the result of the geographical or material factors. However, Bennabi asserted that it is possible for us to remould the approach of Toynbee in light of the Qur'ānic method to explain the civilizational movement in general and that of Islamic civilization in particular. According to him, the emergence of Islamic civilization was caused by the psychological factors imparted on the Muslim personality at the moment Islam started its function in history. In other words, the spiritual forces of faith were the driving force behind the emergence of that civilization. Indeed, "faith\(^2\) is the very center of the sphere of positive moral properties. Belief is the real fountainhead of all Islamic virtues; it creates then all and no virtue is thinkable in Islam, which is not based on the sincere faith in God and His revelation."\(^3\) Apparently, the glorious Qur'ān had put the Islamic conscience between two effective limits, promise and warning. Bennabi asserted that promise is the highest level beyond which any activity is useless, while warning is the lowest level under which any activity is ineffective. He debates that these two pivotal limits are best presented in the following two verses:

Warning:

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\(^2\)I*man* is the Qur'ānic term for "belief" or "faith". The root 'MN has the meaning "peace, security," and iman thus represents the state of being secure in one's belief and of being at peace or harmony with oneself. See, Mir, *Dictionary of Qur'ānic Terms*, Op. cit., p. 69.

Did they then feel secure Against the plan of Allah? But no one can feel secure from the Plan of Allah, except those (Doomed) to ruin?)(7: 99).

Promise:

{Truly No one despairs of Allah’s Soothing Mercy, except Those who have no faith.})(12: 87).

It is clear so far that Bennabi held the view that, “human society has to be conceived within the framework of the Islamic ontological view and in terms of the ethical function humankind is supposed to fulfill in the temporal world. The spiritual forces which lie at the basis of the human historical social action are, therefore, ethically motivated. As a homo religiosus and moral agent, the efficacy of the human being’s action in the socio-historical realm is situated, according to Malik Bennabi, between two limits: warning and promise as expounded by the Qur’an." In line with this, Bennabi provided few examples to explain the fact that religion or spiritual force was behind the entire civilizing process. In his analysis, these two verses represent the dynamic situation in which human being can achieve the optimum of his capacities. It was in this dynamic spiritual state that Bilal (Allah be pleased with him) could resist all sorts of torture poured on his body, raising his hand in a defying response to the challenge of Quraysh: Ahad...Ahad (The One God). It was in this moment where Bilal saw the promise of God to the right

believers. In a nutshell, one may admit that Bennabi rendered the civilizing process to the initial driving force imparted by a religion or a moral principle on the human soul and culture. Accordingly, he asserted that “whether we are dealing with the Islamic or Christian civilization or with other extant civilizations or those, which disappeared, we could ascertain that: the idea, which has inspired its seeds throughout the course of the human history, is a religious idea.” It is clear so far that his view of civilizational movement revolves around the gravitational center of religion or moral principles. This conclusion implies the possibility of overcoming the fatal views that belittle and undermine the role of the moral values and role of human factors in the civilizing process. In other words, Bennabi, “opens up new lines of inquiry which would enable social scientists to overcome the flaws of both an empiricism and positivism which reduced the human being either to a mere object of nature or to a mere bundle of biological needs.”

2 It is worth noting that whatever the form of similarities and common patterns that govern those civilizations we should maintain that there are certain differences resulted from the difference of religions, cultures, traditions and models of personality. For instance in the case of the Islamic and Christian tradition, Hodgson writes: “The two tradition, as such, must be recognized as incompatible in their demands...And we must retain this sense of tension between them without interpreting the one by the standards of the other”. Hodgson, The Venture of Islam, Op. cit., p. 30.
3 Bennabi, Milâd, p. 52.
IV- OBSERVATIONS\textsuperscript{1} ON BENNAPI’S

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

It has been mentioned that the theoretical framework constitutes one of the crucial parts of Bennabi’s method. It is this frame of reference which determines the general vision and the systematic concepts and principles set up for analyzing the problems of civilization. As I have discussed, Bennabi’s framework appears to be comprehensive, original, realistic, criterial, multidimensional and creative. However, one may underline certain shortcomings in this frame. To attain an understanding of these shortcomings an attempt should be made to evaluate his understanding of the nature of the Muslim crisis as well as the vision of approaching it. Regarding his appraisal of the nature of the crisis of Islamic civilization, Bennabi focused more on the internal factors related to the psychosocial context that generated the spirit of colonisibility in the Muslim personality and culture as well. Accordingly, as Bennabi argues this internal problem led the Islamic society to the state of accepting the intervention of the colonial power into the Islamic affairs.

\textsuperscript{1}It is worth noting that in most of the works on Bennabi, I could not come across any attempt of evaluating his theoretical framework. Therefore, most of the comments and observations in this element are the result of the researcher’s efforts and analysis of Bennabi’s thought.
It is obvious that Bennabi’s analysis of the development of Islamic civilization was closely examined with reference to the influence of both, colonization and colonisibility. In fact, Bennabi did not analyze the factors and the causes, which paved the way for colonisibility in the Muslim society. Thank to his systematic analysis of these two concepts which opened new horizon for the Muslim to understand the reasons for his decline. However, it is crucial to ask about the capacity of the concept of colonisibility in providing a comprehensive explanation of the degeneration of Islamic culture and civilization.

In fact, what Bennabi provided is an analysis of colonisibility as a pre-condition for colonization, but he did not tell us much about the pre-colonisibility. In other words, one cannot find a clear study of the seeds and causes which paved the way for this phenomenon in the Muslim personality and history. It will be very important if one finds in his analysis a study of the factors and reasons which developed the spirit of colonisibility1 within the living context of the Islamic culture and civilization per se.

What matters us in this regard, is to analyze the real changes and modifications which occurred within the Muslim personality and culture from the very beginning stages of its development. Indeed, one should discover a criterion

that can explain the phenomenon of decline of the civilization. In fact, Bennabi attempted through his two concepts, that of colonisibility and that of colonization to introduce a criterion for the study of Islamic civilization and its problems. However, one may refer to another important concept, which can explain the deep reasons for the psychic of colonisibility as such. Indeed, any attempt to study the nature of the crisis of Islamic civilization should refer to the quality and originality of the relation between the human consciousness and revelation. In fact, in the cradle of this relation lies a very deep and crucial reason for the decline of Islamic civilization. In other words, At what extent this relation between revelation and Muslim consciousness could explain the real crisis of Islamic civilization?

Taking into consideration, this observation would allow us to add another important factor to what has been developed by Bennabi in his explanation of the Islamic crisis. To express this point in a slightly different way, one may say that whenever the Muslim loses his purity and methodology of understanding and implementing revelation as a source of faith, guidance, knowledge, behavior, social relations and culture, then he loses all his capacities of developing an original and effective method and civilization as well. Consequently, the Muslim faces all sorts of degeneration and distortion, such as the psychic of colonisibility.

As a matter of fact, in all periods and stages of disintegration of the Islamic personality and society there is a problem of this relation between the Muslim and revelation. For instance, the shift of the Muslim society from the consultation
system to the dynasty and individual system, the close of the door of Ijtihad, the
political disunity of the Islamic societies at that time, the ideological conflict
among various Muslim sects and the decline of the educational institutions was in
a major part due to the fact that the Muslim personality and society is no longer
able to deal with revelation in a proper and systematic way. In fact, colonisibility
itself was in one of its dimensions another result of the weakness of the capacities
of the Muslim and his society to understand and implement the methods and
teachings of Islam in order to deal with the ideological, political, social, cultural
and civilizational problems of Islamic civilization.

In fact, we should examine this relation between the revelation and the
Muslim mind and society in order to find out the real causes, which were
accumulated throughout the course of history to formulate what Bennabi called
colonisibility. Indeed, any study of the nature of the crisis of Islamic civilization
should not undermine this important factor. In other words, one should ask
questions about the capacity of Muslims to deal and interact with revelation, the
methods of the interaction, the negative or positive applications of this relation on
the development of the Islamic thought and Islamic society.

Additionally, we should underline the fact that the crisis of Islamic
civilization is in its major part due to the fact that the Muslim himself lost the
intellectual and methodological capacities of understanding and implementing the
Islamic teaching in the individual and social context. The matter of the truth is that the Muslim lacked the capacity and the method, which would enable, him to comprehend and implement revelation as a source for self and social development. "This is why reconstructing a methodology for dealing with the Qur'ān as a source of knowledge for the natural and social sciences will empower those sciences to contribute effectively to human life and to the crises that are now confronting it."\(^1\)

As a matter of fact, the Muslim view of the crisis becomes partial and fragment. Therefore, the Muslim society is unable to pass beyond the superficial factors in order to discover the deep reasons for its decline in several aspects of life. Therefore, one should insist that the role of the Muslim society in general and the Muslim scholars in particular is to provide the methods and tools of interpreting and implementing revelation in order to examine at what extent our capacity of dealing with the revelation is effective and original.

Indeed, Bennabi was generally aware of this point, but he did not develop tools and techniques for dealing with revelation and implementing it in reality. Rather, he was concerned with one of its effects, which is colonisibility. Therefore, we should relate the nature of the crisis of Islamic civilization not only to the effects but also essentially to the relation of the Muslim with his sources of guidance and civilization. This would imply the need for a new paradigm and

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system of thought that could restore the intellectual, social and civilizational capacities of the Muslim. In other words, "it is this realization coupled with other factors that have motivated Muslim thinkers and scientists to restore the Tawhidic paradigm in all the modern sciences and call for the application of Islamic cosmology, epistemology and axiology in the pursuit of knowledge. The current Islamization of human knowledge movement is a direct product of this Islamic intellectual awareness. If Bennabi knew how value-loaded are the social science disciplines which are undergoing a crisis in paradigm and how ethnocentric and contextual were some of the early theories of Western sociology and psychology, he would probably have addressed himself the issue."¹ Another important observation on Bennabi’s framework is his emphasis on civilization as the basic unit of the analysis of human history in general and of Islamic civilization in particular. According to him, any analysis of the crisis of Islamic civilization should consider civilization itself as the criterion² of analysis. In other words, one should view problems from a civilizational perspective. Any society, which cannot construct its civilization, it may be unable to solve its social, economic, political and cultural problems. That is to say, if we attempt to analyze the crisis of Islamic civilization, we should examine whether the Muslim society is in a state of civilization or in a state of decline. In other words, we should examine its reality and evaluate its situation in order to see whether it comprises the condition of

civilization or not. According to Bennabi, in order for any society to be civilized it should solve the previous equation of civilization.

In fact, this view may lead to certain kind of ambiguity, particularly when we consider civilization as the basic unit of analysis of the problem of society; we may undermine the important influence of the partial problems or factors. For instance, the economic, social, and political problems become little by little units of analysis which possess their own tools and methods of study. Therefore, if we consider civilization as the basic unit of analysis, we may undermine the particularity of those fields of analysis. Hence, we should develop a method that can include the civilizational view, besides the specific characteristics of every field of the analysis of the partial problems. On the other hand, if we focus only on the civilizational view of things there may be some sorts of undermining the importance of the particular fields. Appositely, if we concentrate only on the particular fields undermining the civilizational vision, then the result may not be helpful in understanding all dimensions of the problems. Consequently, we should emphasize the importance of combining between the particular and the civilizational in the study of the problems of the Islamic civilization. For example, in analyzing the social problems we should have a civilizational view which can help in determining the general perspectives of the analysis, besides, the particular

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1 We should look at this issue not only in terms of its theoretical importance but mainly in term of its possibility. In other words, we should develop practical tools and methods that could help in implementing this approach in different aspects of our life.
tools and concepts which can help in examining the real factors and situations related to these specific problems with respect to every branch of human knowledge. With this integration one may have a faire chance to study the problems of Islamic civilization in a comprehensive and systematic way.

Another additional observation on Bennabi's framework of analysis could be seen in his understanding of the nature of the method of treating the problem of civilization. According to him, the method of analysis should integrate between induction and deduction as well as combine several disciplines including social sciences, natural sciences and sciences of religion. Moreover, the method should combine analysis and synthesis. In spite of the importance of the multidimensional approach, one may face certain practical problems in generalizing it. Indeed, viewing a phenomenon from different perspectives and dimensions is requested. However, the basic problem that faces us in most of the cases is related to the difficulty of finding researchers with this encyclopedic knowledge. As a matter of fact, in our present time the different branches of sciences and knowledge face a process of development and specialization which makes those sciences more detailed and specialized. For instance, if one uses psychology to understand the psychological dimension of any phenomenon he will be challenged by various branches and several methods of analysis, it is the same with other disciplines. Hence, it will be very difficult to develop a linkage approach that can be
generalized among the researchers to study systematically the problems of Islamic civilization.

Therefore, the issue of the multidimensional approach may pose a heavy burden on the side of the researchers\(^1\), because of the nature of the present educational system which separates between the disciplines in general and between the religious studies and that of the human and natural sciences in particular. Hence, the researchers would not be able to formulate a multidimensional background. Rather than, a specialized background which will not allow them to go beyond their areas of specialization in most of the cases. Consequently, one cannot generalize the concept of the linkage method and implement it in the field of research. Otherwise, a multidimensional or integrative educational system should be formulated to combine the different disciplines and ensure the process of integrating human knowledge with revealed knowledge. In other words, "we must reorganize and reorient the methodology of Islamic education and instruction in order to put an end to the confused dualism that divides knowledge into intellectual, social, religious, and legal categories, thereby creating further dualism"\(^2\)

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\(^1\)In the present dualistic composition of the educational system of the Islamic world.

Therefore, Islamic civilizing process should "remove the duality of education inherited from the colonial era and perpetuated by colonized minds into the post colonial period. The cultural schism among Muslims educated in the 'secular' and 'religious' streams with its vast socio-political implications need no longer be a feature of contemporary Muslim societies."\(^1\)

On the other hand, one may think of benefiting from the general methods and principles of several disciplines instead of dealing with the sciences themselves. In this case, the researcher can study the phenomenon through different perspectives and methods. However, a difficulty may appear in the implementation of the different tools and concepts as well as in the problem of value free paradigm of contemporary dominant Western knowledge.

Another observation on Bennabi’s framework of analysis is related to his understanding of the phenomenon of civilization. According to al-Qurayshi, Bennabi’s view of civilization emphasized more the material and practical aspects. He stated that "Bennabi’s view emphasizes the material, technical and pragmatic dimensions of the phenomenon of civilization."\(^2\) It is clear that al-Qurayshi’s statement reflected his misunderstanding of Bennabi’s view of civilization. Indeed, Bennabi was aware of the practical and material problems of civilization, but his

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main concern was to find out the method of formulating a civilization within the context of the Muslim culture, soil and time.

Therefore, the moral and religious aspects of civilization took precedence in all his works. According to him, a civilization cannot commence in history unless a moral principle or a religious idea drives the people into the threshold of history. In order to attain an understanding of his view of civilization, we should distinguish between the civilizing process and the civilization as such. It seems that al-Qurayshi did not differentiate between these two levels of analysis.

According to Bennabi, the civilizing process should comprise the moral and material aspects. However, in this stage he emphasized more on the moral and ethical principles. For instance, in his books: Birth of a Society, The Conditions of the Renaissance and The Qur'anic Phenomenon, he maintained the view that no civilizing process can be achieved unless a moral principle or a religious idea formulates the atmosphere for the birth of a civilization. On the other hand, the stage of civilization differs from the stage of the civilizing process. According to Bennabi, civilization is a moral and material state of development and stability which formulates the living social atmosphere which allows the members of the community to progress and advance in various aspects of life. That is to say, when the society reaches the stage of civilization, then it should objectify its essence and intellectual content in its accomplishments. In other words, it should materialize.
itself in the individual and social context. Accordingly, it should be embodied in
the political, economic, social and cultural spheres as a material driving force,
which transforms the entire society under the orientation of its moral edifice.
Therefore, when we defuse these two different but integral levels of analysis, the
result may lead to a misunderstanding of the essence of the concepts and ideas.
Another important comment on Bennabi theoretical framework has to do with his
understanding of the ingredient of the civilization. By his account, civilization
equal to man plus soil plus time. These three elements cannot involve in a
civilizing process unless a religious idea or a moral principle involves in the
process. Thus, the study of civilization requires the analysis of these four elements.
The very concern of Bennabi was the study of the possibility of formulating a
psychosocial synthesis which could mould these elements in a civilizing action. In
fact, the very question of this synthesis could not be realized unless we provide its
adequate conditions. I believe the main condition of this synthesis is to think in its
vision, method and social project.

*The vision of the synthesis* including its philosophy and objectives, *the
method of the synthesis* including its tools as well as its means and *the social
project and implications* of the synthesis including its practical strategies and
solutions for the problems of people in a given moment of the development of the
society. That is to say, if we think of constructing a civilization, we should first
think of the vision, method and applications of the synthesis of man, soil and time.
Accordingly, the vision should be original and civilizational by nature. This vision should be derived from the original Islamic sources taking into account the valid human knowledge and experience. Furthermore, the vision should be original, realistic, strategic and universal in its frame and balanced in its way of dealing with human reality and capacity. It should reflect the essence and the spirit of the Islamic vision. These three essential elements "will enable the Muslim mind to deal with its historical and contemporary problems... It should be clear that no society or reformation of society may take place without an epistemological and methodological basis" which contain the vision, project and application.

Regarding the method of the synthesis, we should also emphasize its objectivity and creativity. It should develop tools and techniques that can deal systematically with the individual and social context. The method of synthesis must be able to grasp the essence and role of religion, man, soil and time in the civilizing process. The applications or social project of the synthesis also should be clear and responding to the real problems and social situations of the people. If the synthesis cannot provide answers and solutions to the existing reality of people, then it cannot be considered as a civilizing process.

On the basis of these three important elements, we may note that Bennabi was concerned mainly with the determination of the equation of civilization. He attempted to underscore the role and importance of the synthesis and its elements.

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But we could not find in his attempt a clear analysis of the vision, method and application of the synthesis. In fact, his social context and the nature as well as the characteristics of his period led him to that realistic and adequate answer. He tried to direct the attention of the Muslim society in general and the Muslim thinkers in particular to the role and importance of religion, man, soil and time in the civilizing process. However, our present situation demands a more advanced work which would formulate the synthesis as such in reality through developing the vision, method and project which could respond to the status quo of Islamic civilization.