CHAPTER THREE
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ANALYTICAL TOOLS OF BENNABI'S METHOD OF STUDYING CIVILIZATION

INTRODUCTION

Every writer with a new and insightful message to convey, develops his own concepts, views and tools of analysis. In this respect, Bennabi is no exception. Even when he obtains certain concepts or ideas from the reservoir of already known ideas, his exposition seems to be original. As the foregoing pages have given us an account of the general theoretical framework of his method, the researcher is now in a position to state his analytical tools in approaching the phenomenon of civilization. To attain an understanding of these tools and their basic applications, one should first provide a simple and clear definition of what they mean. Broadly defined, analytical tools refer to the operational concepts and principles applied to analyze any given social or natural phenomenon. These concepts and principles function as tools and channels which help in observing, understanding, analyzing and developing theories and ideas to study any given social phenomenon, such as civilization. With this in mind, it becomes evident that
these tools are needed for at least two main reasons; firstly for a better comprehension of Bennabi’s method in treating the issue of civilization and secondly, for the general evaluation of his contribution as well as verification of the effectiveness and originality of these tools.

Accordingly, and as it is made clear in the above definition, tools in the true sense, are the most important parts of every method. Not only because they reflect the maturity of the method as such, but also because they provide concepts and ideas for a better understanding and conducting of the analysis. Therefore, in any new method, it is of paramount importance to examine these tools. In thinking and theorizing about the method of analyzing the concept of civilization, Bennabi, coined certain operational concepts and developed some principles which served as tools for treating the problems of civilization in general and that of Islamic civilization in particular.

Before one proceeds further, it is worth remarking that it is not a simple task to possess a thorough knowledge and a comprehensive understanding of his tools, largely due to the fact that these tools are not clearly stated. Rather, they are deeply hidden and intertwined throughout the whole range of his various ideas and complicated interpretations as well as in the different issues, which he discussed. As a result, the knowledge, which we may acquire of Bennabi’s tools of analysis, is inorganic and disjoined, and the image, which we may have of his method, is
vague, fragmented and lacking interrelatedness and consistency. Therefore, one of the aims of the present chapter is to bring back the sense of unity and interrelatedness to his analytical tools. To put it in a slightly different way, the researcher has tried to look at his works and thoroughly investigate them in order to grasp the essence of these tools and their functions in his method. It is a matter of bringing together some concepts, which apparently seemed to be separate and sometimes contradict each other. Then and only then one may have an unbiased opportunity of drafting a sound study of these tools and their important role in treating the phenomenon of civilization in general and that of the Islamic civilization in particular.

With the help of investigation, I have outlined five pivotal concepts, which, I believe, constitute the main tools utilized in most of his works. Namely, concept of the three historical-cultural positions of a society, concept of the three realms of a society, concept of the three psychosocial ages of a society, concept of social relations network and concept of the cyclical movement of a civilization. On the basis of these concepts, I then attempt to draw a sketch conveying some ideas of what these tools are and how they are used.
I- CONCEPT OF THE THREE HISTORICAL-CULTURAL POSITIONS\textsuperscript{1} OF A SOCIETY

According to Bennabi, every human society, in its historical evolution, is situated in a historical-cultural reality that determines its stage of development or backwardness. This living reality reflects the quality of the human personality and the level of the maturity of the society in a given position of its historical evolution. Accordingly, this reality changes and differs from one society to another and from one period to another within a single society. The change of this reality depends on the quality of the human mind as well as on the characteristics of the entire movement of the society in a given position.\textsuperscript{2} That is to say, a human society is not fixed in its entire life in one position or situation. On the contrary, it transfers from one state to another following the historical-cultural values that dominate its activities in the different stages of its development. Therefore, knowing the position of a society in this reality is of significance, because it will help us in determining the stage of its evolution and its general characteristics as well as its capacities.

\textsuperscript{1}Usually the writers on Bennabi's thought use the term "stage" or "phase". In the present thesis the term "position" is seemed more adequate because of two reason. Firstly, it reflects the essence of Bennabi's view of the concept as we shall analyze. Secondly, to avoid the confuse which may flow from our study of other tools like the cyclical phenomenon where most of his writers use also the term "stage".

\textsuperscript{2}The term position here is not a mere location one stand which could be taken by an individual. It is rather a concept which contain psychosocial and cultural-historical indication.
It should further be known that this historical-cultural reality, in its essence, manifests the nature and kind of the conversation between man and his culture. It is "recorded in time in the form of a civilization or a culture." Bennabi argues that the concept of the three positions is one of the important tools, which could provide an important interpretation of the movement of the human society. Throughout this concept one could draw a comprehensive picture of the different situations and states of the evolution of the society and the values of its civilization. Thus, the problems and crises of the civilization could be addressed and solved with reference to this concept which assists in drawing a real picture of society in a given moment of its evolution. In this respect, Bennabi stated:

"In general, on the axis representing the stages of development, a historical society, whether extinct or extant, has to occupy a specific location. In this respect, history records the existence of three stages: 1- Society in the pre-civilized position or state, 2- Society in the civilized position, and 3- Society in the post civilized position." 

In the body of the above passage, Bennabi touches upon the concept of the three positions or states of a society. It is clear, then, that a human society undergoes a process of development in three integral positions or states of evolution. In a broad sense, every society at a given historical moment is situated

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in one of these positions. In other words, "it takes a specific position on an axis which represent all the stages of its development"\textsuperscript{1} Every position characterizes the society with certain specific values and features. We are further told, in the above passage, that every society has to occupy one of the positions and, then, its development starts from it.

Thus, one may note that human societies are not situated in one similar position or state of development. Rather, each one of them stands in a determined position that reflects the entire picture of its movement as well as its historical-cultural reality. In this respect, human history reveals that some societies are in the pre-civilized position\textsuperscript{2}, while others are in the civilized position and others are in the post-civilized position. Hence, the treatment of these societies and analysis of their values and characteristics is totally different from each other.

Therefore, it is of importance to underline the historical-cultural reality in which the Islamic civilization is situated in its present evolution. Knowing this position would allow us to know our weaknesses and setbacks as well as it would help in introducing appropriate solutions to cure them.

To exemplify this, it must suffice to discuss¹ these different positions and their interrelatedness as well as their function in Bennabi’s method.

A- SOCIETY IN THE PRE-CIVILIZED POSITION

Historically speaking, every human society is situated in one of the previous mentioned positions or states. It is the understanding of this concept of the three positions that allows us to follow the different states which every society experiences in its historical development. In fact, throughout examining every position or state in which society is situated, one can see its cultural and civilizational level of development or stagnation and backwardness. Bennabi used this concept as a tool to discover the point of starting in the civilizational analysis of the problems of human society. By his account, every state delineates the characteristics and nature of human personality and cultural values of the society in the exciting position or situation. In the pre-civilized state or position, the society has its own peculiarities not only at the material level but also at the intellectual context, style of the culture, quality of the mind and nature of its entire movement.

¹It is evident to mention that most of the writers on Bennabi’s thought did not provide enough definitions and explanations of what does this concept mean or how could it be used in dealing with the issues of civilization. In the present work an attempt is made to define the concept and analyze its methodological significance in Bennabi’s tools of analysis.
According to Bennabi, in this state, the society is still in the stage of absence from the historical civilizational action that makes it capable of playing its role in the general development of human civilization. This situation of absence and inactivity prevents the society from any kind of civilized work. Consequently, its vital energy and capacity remains in a static and immobile state.

In Bennabi's view, the pre-civilized society is located in a dead-positional situation, because its culture is at that moment incapable of impelling its civilizing capacities into a civilizing process. In other words, it undergoes a critical situation of inertia and torpidity. Furthermore, he argues that "the human groups appointed, since the time of Levy-Bruhl,¹ as primitive societies whose life does not change its organization and structure like the colonies of ants which remain unchanged for thousands of years....The life of such groups still represent a status which mankind had undergone in pre-historical age."² Additionally, the society in this position does not enjoy the capacity of orienting its civilizing capacities. In fact, it lacks all sorts of civilizing will and power that can assist its members in playing a dynamic and constructive role in the development of their personality and civilization.

¹Levy Bruhl, Lucien (1857-1939). He was born in Paris. He was a French philosopher and anthropologist.
According to Bennabi, knowing this position and its characteristics is important at two levels; firstly at the level of understanding the movement of a society and its civilization. Secondly, at the level of determining the adequate method and technique for dealing with its situations and problems. In fact, one should note that the society in this position possesses all its civilizing capacities, but in an inertial state. Bennabi argues that the capacities of any pre-civilized society are mainly man, soil and time. Therefore, in order for this society to commence a civilizing process, there must be a sacred source, in the form of a religion or a moral principle, that can activate and organize the three elements in the form of a social project which aims at formulating a civilization.

One must admit, however, that no civilizing process starts within the context of the historical-cultural reality of this society, unless a transforming project commences its changing function within the human personality as well as the cultural surroundings. In other words, if there is no a systematic attempt to synthesize the three civilizing capacities of the society: man, soil and time, this society remains similar to the "static groups which, by contrast, lead an aimless collective life thus denoting the status of pre-civilization."¹ Thus, this society will freeze in the state of historical-cultural inertia that classifies it in the range of the "primitive society that had an immature view of things, persons and ideas."²

Additionally, Bennabi emphasized the importance of the context of this historical-cultural state of the evolution of a society. In fact, if we look deep into the context of the pre-civilized position, we can see the general picture of the individual and society as well. This picture provides us with the necessary information about the entire life of people and their features as well as the positive or negative aspects of the society. That is to say, knowing the context of this position will enable us to select the suitable solutions and decisions that may address effectively the problems of this society in this state. Apparently, knowing the context of a society in a given position constitute the main core upon which a project of reconstruction may stand in order to transform the spirit and values of the pre-civilized man and society into the new civilizing values and spirit.

Moreover, this context helps in formulating a comprehensive view about the type of human personality and mind. Bennabi argues that man in this position lives in the natural and congenital state. He is the man of nature who is ready to commence a civilizing movement. Indeed, all his capacities are ready to be oriented in a social project. In Bennabi’s terms, “he is the pre-civilized man”, who is ready to enter the world civilization as an efficacious planner of the social life and values. He further debates that:

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"The pre-civilized man remains ready-similar to the situation of the Bedouin who were contemporary to the Prophet- to enter in a civilizing process.... The pre-civilized man, i.e., who 'has yet not enter in a civilizing movement possesses a sustained energy which is exposed to a dynamic historical action.'\(^1\)

Therefore, we should be aware of these capacities of the society, particularly when we commence thinking in the civilizing process. It is clear so far that the context of this historical-cultural position is helpful in determining the quality and nature of the human personality as well as human culture in a given position of its evolution. In other words, this concept has a functional role and it can be used as a tool for analyzing the movement of a society and its civilization in that moment of its evolution.

C- SOCIETY IN THE CIVILIZED POSITION

It is clear from the preceding, that society of the pre-civilized position is characterized by the spirit of inertia and motionlessness, even though, its capacities are ready to impel into a civilizing process. On the contrary, the society of the civilized\(^2\) position or state is distinguished by its efficacy and motion. All peculiarities of a dynamic and vigorous society are manifested in this historical-

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cultural context. Bennabi argues that the "human group acquires the quality of society when it starts moving, that is to say, when it commences changing itself in order to achieve its objectives. This fact coincides, from the historical point of view, with the moment civilization makes its advent."\(^1\)

From the above and similar passages, we are led to underline the difference between the two positions, that of inertia and that of motion. In fact, the latter reflects the ability of the society in organizing and orienting its civilizing capacities at maximum. It depicts the point in which society "starts to interact effectively with history"\(^2\). Indeed, at this position, the society moves forward to realize its civilizational being as a self-cultural and social entity. That is to say, civilization in this stage vests itself in a specific cultural context that objectifies its own world view\(^3\) and provides for it the conditions of its development.

Therefore, this unique cultural context "makes a distinct attitude, common to the entire society and manifests itself in their languages and literature, in their art and philosophy, in their customs, manners, laws and modes of worship. In a word it represents their genius."\(^4\)

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As a matter of fact, we should note that when a society reaches this state of development, all its capacities and skills are directed towards the realization of a civilization, which "could provide the necessary requirements for its member, whatever their position in the society."\textsuperscript{1} Civilization, in this context, reveals the level of liveliness and maturity of its man and the style of its culture. Additionally, civilization "must also represent a process of perfection of the individual himself, of his faculties, his sentiment, his ideas making organized civil life humane or such as may glorify human nature. In other words, civilization must always manifest two symptoms—progress of society, and progress of humanity."\textsuperscript{2}

Bennabi argues that, the main feature of this position could be seen in the model of man and his behavior. In fact, he emphasized the above aspect and strongly argues that "civilization commences with the integral man, constantly adapting his efforts to his ideals and needs, and accomplishing in society his double mission of actor and witness."\textsuperscript{3} That is to say, this historical-cultural position or state of the social development owes its existence to the systematic movement of man himself who is prepared to drive the civilizing capacities of people towards the realization of a civilizational project.

Thus, at this position society enjoys an active culture, an effective movement, a clear vision and a systematic project for action. Moreover, he argues that there is a relationship between the historical-cultural position of a society and its capacity to protect its civilization and keep its movement of development. In fact, in the pre-civilized position or state, the society is unable to protect its civilizing capacities. Whereas, in the civilized position, the society enjoys a vital energy which assists it in protecting its persons, objects and ideas. According to him, “the role of a society is to preserve the individual and to achieve the goals of its groups.” Here one should emphasize the importance of the civilizational function of the society. As a matter of fact, the true picture of this function is embodied in the historical-cultural context of the civilized position. To put it in a slightly different way, through analyzing the civilized position of the society one may find an important tool that can mirror the entire context and reality of people and their culture. Thus, this tool provides us with the information needed in the treatment of the problems of civilization in this context.

C- SOCIETY IN THE POST- CIVILIZED POSITION

Society in the post-civilized position or state commences losing its civilizing capacities. It stops moving forward in the same line of its original path. After the period of a civilizing state, the society embarks in a new situation of

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backwardness and decline. Hence, all its dynamic features lose their living force and motivating milieu. The society, then, starts an opposite movement of degeneration that ruins its organization, structure and function.

The first step of degeneration of society is manifested in the quality of its new human personality. It is man who degenerates by losing all kinds of liveliness and the necessary means to sustain that level of society at the very least. Next to the decline of human personality, the culture of the society commences its movement of disintegration. Hence, civilization itself "suffers a retrogression"\(^1\), which frazzles and exhausts its civilizing capacities. Consequently, the society throws off its systematic vision and its clear mission and direction. When the human personality\(^2\) is weakened and the human culture is declined, the society ceases its civilizational progress. Thus, it moves forward to the post-civilized position, which represents the last segment of the evolution of a civilization in history. It is the moment of the end of the civilizing function of the society. Accordingly, it is the era of degeneration, which reflects a deep inflexion in the system of values, and in the civilizing spirit of the individual and society as well.\(^3\)

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Another illustration and case in point is given by Bennabi stating that the historians usually differentiate between the first and the second position but no distinction is made between the second and the third position. They believe that, a post-civilized society is simply a society that follows its course on the same way of its civilization. This regrettable mistake initiates all sorts of ambiguity that faces the society in its evolution from one position to another. It also creates the spirit of delusion when it reveals to the society that it moves forward in its progress. To remove this state of confusion, Bennabi argues that:

"A post-civilized society is by no means an immovable society. Rather, it is a society that has transposed the order of its course. Thus, it regresses as it has departed from and bankrupted with the way of its civilization."

As an explanation of the above point, Bennabi preferred to refer to Ibn Khaldun in his analysis of the decline of Islamic civilization. He quoted the following passage from the *Muqaddimah*:

"The Islamic East, it seems, was similarly visited, though in accordance with and in proportion to (the East's more affluent) civilization. It was as if the voice of existence in the world had called out for oblivion and restriction in the world responded to its call."

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here Bennabi explained the decline that occurred in the Muslim society during its post-civilized position or state. He described how the society went afield beyond the limitation of its original path. It is the moment of disintegration and grand transition that causes a deep transfer of values into the cultural and social life of people. According to Bennabi, Ibn Khaldūn was able one century after the fall of Bagdad and before that of Granada, to note the breaking point in the cycle of Islamic civilization, the point from which started the post- al Muwahhid era, that is the post-civilization era of the Muslim world as we shall see. In a broad sense “a post civilization society is not a motionless society it is, rather a society moving downwards or backwards, after having deviated from the path of its civilization and after having lost the links with its civilization.” Conforming to this norm, the society in the post-civilized position continues its movement. However, this movement may become destructive and harmful. Therefore, differentiating between this position and others is significant and beneficial in determining the real situation of the society.

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In Bennabi's view, this distinction represents an indicator of the transformation and change in the values and mind sets within one single society or within different societies. Accordingly, our treatment of the situation should be related to the new changes that occur in the life of the individual and society in a given position.

In fact, these positions and their living context vary, based on the quality of values and the nature of man in a given moment of the development. Bennabi argues that man either lives in a pre-civilization position or in a civilized position or he abandons civilization. As a matter of fact, these three positions are totally different from each other. It is obvious that the civilized man is different from the uncivilized man, but one should also note the difference between the man who is thrown over from a civilization and the one who has not yet commence his civilization. The man who is withdrawn from a civilization contains certain indelible impressions and after effect which make him a source of problems and difficulties in the society. "While the man who has not yet started his civilization is simple to be oriented and conducted in a civilizing process."

Indeed, Bennabi was concerned with the third position of the development of the society and its historical-cultural context, because he realized that the Muslim world is situating in this position. Accordingly, in his opinion, any solution

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or treatment prepared to the Muslim civilization should take into consideration the nature and type of the crisis faced in the post-civilized position. It should face the challenge of creating a new synthesis of man, soil and time. The rational, which implies this kind of solution, is because in this position man "loses every originality in thought or in the behavior in front of others."2

To regain this originality and dynamic behavior, we should formulate a new man who will carry out the mission of a civilizing process. To sum up, the whole survey shows that the concept of the three historical-cultural positions represents in Bennabi's method one of the most important tools of analysis. Knowing the three positions in which society is situated will assist in determining its characteristics and the nature of the problems that it face at that moment of its evolution. For instance, by his account, one cannot merely suggest any solution to treat the problems of Islamic civilization without taking into consideration the concept of the three positions. In relation to this, he directed us to the pragmatic nature of the above concept. He argues that "what is convenient for a given society in this position or period of its development may become totally harmful for it in another position."3 This leads us to the fact that one cannot suggest a solution unless he is well versed in the position of the development of society.

Attributing such importance to the concept of the three positions, one should remark that Bennabi used his concept to achieve two significant objectives; firstly he used it to explain how human society is governed by certain patterns and laws. In this respect, the concept of the three positions represents an attempt to discover one of the general abstract laws, which governs the evolution of human societies. Secondly, he utilized the concept to determine the location and state of the contemporary Islamic civilization and the nature of its crisis.

According to him, the Muslim society is presently in the third position. It is a society, which ended its cycle of civilization, and it is now situated in the post-civilized position. In fact, this realization enabled him to provide a deep analysis of the Islamic situation and to offer certain solutions to overcome the problem as we have seen in the foregoing chapter.\(^1\)

II- CONCEPT OF THE THREE REALMS OF A CIVILIZATION

Still, at a general level at this juncture, one ought to go beyond the previous analysis in order to discover other tools of Bennabi’s method. Obviously, the concept of the three positions assists in understanding the general development of society and its different civilizational positions in a given moment of its evolution. There is a need; however, much one may thereby expose another important concept that goes beyond the generalities to deeply understand the living context of his tools. In fact, Bennabi developed another concept to analyze the movement of the society and its civilization. In a more abstract nature, he claimed that every work or action in the human society is formulated of three categories of elements. In any human work, one should find a man who performs it as well as the instruments used to accomplish it, but these two elements are not functioning without any goals or patterns. Therefore, the human action requires another element; namely ideas which motivate our actions as well as determine our goals. Bennabi debates that if we suppose that one wants to analyze the action of the craftsman examining his piece of work with a chisel in his hand, or the action of a farmer stooping over his plough as well as the action of a soldier armed with his gun. It is obvious that in the above cases, the action is completed by means of two visible factors: a man and his instruments. In every human action, these two
elements\textsuperscript{1} are necessary. However, the action cannot be accomplished except within the conditions that answer the question of how and why as we do not act haphazardly lest our task become impossible nor do we act motivelessly lest we undertake an absurd task\textsuperscript{2} These conditions are precisely the ideological and intellectual foundations, which polarizes the human activities and energies\textsuperscript{3} Bennabi argues that:

\textit{"No action can be brought about outside a given scheme that encompasses, simultaneously with the visible elements, an ideological element representing both its motivations and operational patterns which summarize every social and technological progress of a society."}\textsuperscript{4}

Hence, the component of any action belongs, at the final analysis, to three categories: the category of objects, the category of persons and the category of ideas.\textsuperscript{5} In line with this, one should note that civilization represents one of the deep and complicated human actions which is performed by a given group of people. Accordingly, this complicated action, like others, owes its existence to the three mentioned elements.

\textsuperscript{1}Al-Qurayshi, \textit{Al-Tagyūr}, Op. cit., pp. 105-106.
\textsuperscript{5}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 28.
In other words, civilization is the result of the interaction of these three realms as Bennabi entitled them. He said:

"The perpetual collective activity (civilization) carried out by the persons, ideas and objectives and which is thus engraved in the memory of time. If one seeks a more precise expression, one would say that the making of history (civilizational action) comes about as a result of the influence of three social categories:
- The realm of persons,
- The realm of ideas and
- The realm of objects."

Attributing such importance to these realms, Bennabi, in another instance, maintained that these realms do not act separately from one another. They are rather incorporated in a concerted action whose scheme is limited by ideological worldview which originated from the realm of ideas so as to be implemented by means of the realm of objects to achieve objectives determined by the realm of persons. According to him, the unity of these realms and their goals will lead to a systematic kind of action that will be embodied in the form of a civilization. Before any further analysis, it is significant to determine what Bennabi meant by each one of the three realms.

4 Even all the significance which one may attribute to these realms in Bennabi’s method, I do not come across any mature attempt to conceptualize them as tools of analysis.

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As a matter of fact, he did not provide any precise definitions for any of them. It is obvious that he used them as tools of analysis without offering enough explanation. Therefore, my attempt in the next point is to examine the meaning of these elements and their role in Bennabi’s method.

A- REALM\(^1\) OF PERSONS

Literally speaking, a person means, a living human being... an individual of specified character\(^2\) In another definition “person” denotes “a man, woman or child regarded as having a distinct individuality, personality as distinguished from animal or thing... human being or a collection of human beings considered as having rights and duties.”\(^3\) If one peers deep into the above definitions, one would notice that a person is a human being in totality containing his entire faculties including his body, senses, personality, heart, mind and mentality. In addition to the set of rights and duties that can be attributed to this human being.\(^4\)

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\(^1\)The term “Alam” is used in different works of Bennabi. However some translators of his books into English use the terms: realm, universe or world as translation. Realm means kingdom, province, domain. Whereas the word “world” means: "the universe...any domain of existence or activities...the totality of things or events". See, *New Webster’s Dictionary*, (U.S.A: Lexicon publication, 1992). pp. 831-1133. In the present research we will consider ‘realm’ as a comprehensive domain that consist of systematic activities and functions.


\(^4\) Please refer to the concept of man which is analyzed in the second chapter of the present thesis.
Thus, the term "person" can be defined as a living human being to whom is attributed certain faculties of spiritual and material nature. Additionally, it is of equal importance, to underline the fact that we should also emphasize the social dimension of the person in which all his relations and interactions in life are manifested.

Viewing Bennabi's opinion on the definition of the word "person" shows that he did not pay much attention to the definition as such; rather he utilized it as a concept that carries a social context. In other words, he used the term with reference to his general framework of analysis to denote one sort of human gathering or assembly that performs a social function. In other words, it is not a matter of studying the subject of man as a philosophical issue. Rather, to study him in the general framework required in the civilizational transformation\(^1\) of his personality and culture.

In his view, a human society consists of individuals who share a common custom and culture, live together and act in order to achieve their objectives. This collection of individuals whose will is directed towards achieving a social project is called, in Bennabi's terms, "realm of persons". In fact, any type of human gathering and common life which does not create a link and relation among individuals and organize them in the form of a society are excluded from the true

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meaning of persons in its civilizational sense. Accordingly, those individuals are a mere group of people who live a simple life. That is to say, they are still in the pre-civilized position. In order for these individuals to achieve their social integrity as a civilized group, a process of civilizing transformation is direly needed. The latter, as Bennabi put it, aspires toward:

"Transforming the individual from the state of being an individual in order to make him a person. This occurs by changing his primary qualities, which link him to the species into social trends that, would link him to the society."  

It is apparent from the above passage that Bennabi did not mean the individual by the term "persons" but rather, the transformed individual. By his account, the realm of persons represents a category of individuals who are transformed in their personality and in their relations. Those individuals are prepared to impersonate a determined civilizational function in the society. A person is very different from an individual; the former enjoys the capacities of being able to utilize all his civilizing potencies in the benefit of his society and he is prepared to function as a dynamic social agent for change and development. That is to say, he is a human being who is thoroughly aware of his vision, mission and function as a member of a civilized community. Whereas, the individual is still

incapable of realizing his civilizational function. He is in the state of a pre-social maturity that reflects his incapability of entering into a civilizing project unless a process of transformation is applied to him.

Clear thus far, that Bennabi utilized the term "persons" to denote the possible sum total of relations that can be constructed by a group of individuals. According to him, the consistency and interaction within the realm of persons is indispensable in the process of social transformation of the individual into a person who builds civilizational relations with others. It is this system of relations that makes this group of persons constructive or destructive. Bennabi held the view that "it is this specific relations within (the realm of persons) which provides the necessary links between the ideas and the objects in the course of the concerted activity undertaken by a society.""1

In Bennabi’s opinion, every transformed society has its realm of persons, but the significance and function of those persons depend on their ability to understand and play their civilizational role in history. It is the nature and effectiveness of the relations2 within the realm of persons, which decides its historical function. Bennabi goes on to explain how this realm of persons was formulated in history taking into consideration the case of Islamic civilization. For

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instance, he debates that the realm of persons of the Jahili\textsuperscript{1} society was confined to the boundaries of the tribe.\textsuperscript{2}

Therefore, it cannot be considered as a transformed realm that is qualified to carry out a civilizing process, because all its civilizing capacities were marginalized and wasted within the tribal system and context. Instead, of utilizing its abilities in the boundaries of a more open civilizing horizon, it destroyed them afield. Indeed, this society represents a society in a pre-civilized position in which almost all its civilizing capacities were frozen. In this context, this realm of persons can only be regarded as a mere gathering of individuals without any civilizational world view or social dynamic project. However, Bennabi asserted that a sudden idea emerged to illuminate the darkness of the Jahiliyyah and to initiate a new path in history. Its light brought about a message commencing with the word “read”. It is at that moment where a new society was born in the world civilization. It commenced breaking within itself the tribal frontiers so as to have founded its new realm of persons. This is the new atmosphere in which each individual became a bearer of its message and a builder of the new society and civilization. In the same breath, Bennabi pressed on and further argues that in “the beginning, as the integration process of Islamic society started in history, its realm

\textsuperscript{1}Jahiliyyah is the name of the “dark” or “unenlightened” age in the history of Arabia before the advent of Islam... In the Qur'\textsuperscript{\textacutedit}{ā}nic usage, one can see, the word covers “ignorance” of many types, Jahiliyyah representing any system of life, behavior, or attitude that is uniformed by the proper ethical-intellectual vision. See, Mir, Dictionary of Qur'\textsuperscript{\textacutedit}{ā}nic Terms, Op. cit., pp. 8-9.

\textsuperscript{2}Bennabi, Mil\textsuperscript{ā}d, Op. cit., p. 39.
of persons was founded on a prototype embodied in the al-Ansar and al-Muhajirun community fraternized with each other in al-Madinah. Indeed, this is the type of the realm of persons that impelled the Muslim society onto the world history. From this passage and similar crucial passages in which Bennabi tried to explain the role and importance of the realm of persons, one can realize that he meant by the realm of persons: the gathering of individuals who are transformed and integrated in a social project. They live in harmony and integrity and their movement responds to the needs and requirements of a sacred world view, such as the Islamic ideal.

B- REALM OF IDEAS

It has been mentioned that the realm of persons of the early Islamic society has emerged as a result of the driving force of the Islamic ideal. This point directs our analysis towards the meaning of the realm of ideas. Before we examine Bennabi’s view on this concept, we should consult dictionaries to discern its literal meaning. The term “idea” means “the mental image, conception, an opinion…a plan. (Loosely) knowledge.”

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1The two main groups of the Muslim society in Madinah, Muhajirun were those who migrated from Mekkah. Ansar were the natives who supported the Muhajirun.
Furthermore, it can also denote "something such as a thought or conception, which potentially or actually exists in the mind as a product of mental activity."¹ On the basis of the above definitions one can note that an idea is something that can be produced by the human mind through exercising intellectual activities. Accordingly, it can be a general model or conception that creates images and concepts in the human mind. This image may help man to produce certain kind of knowledge.

In this respect, Lane has mentioned the term "fikir" which is related to the word "al-fikrah" in Arabic language. He noted that "fikir" means "the arranging of things in the mind in order to arrive at some object of which the attainment is desired, though it can be put a preponderating opinion."² In Ṭāj al-Arūs, "fikr" is something related to the human efforts that attempt to obtain a clear knowledge about things.³ On the other hand, the Qur'ān refers to this term as a process of reflection and speculation.

Allah (S.W.T.) says:

{Thus doth Allah Make clear to you His Signs: in order that Ye may consider} 
(2:219).

In the above verse, tafakkara\(^1\) refers to mental activities and intellectual processes performed by our mental faculties. It is the driving force that ensures the power for brain to function and produce knowledge\(^2\) In another verse the holly Qur'ān states:

\textit{Do they not reflect In their own minds? Not but for just ends and for a term appointed, Did Allah create the heavens and the earth, and all Between them: yet are there Truly many among men Who deny meeting with their Lord (at the resurrection)?} (30:8).

It is clear from the above verse that the process of thinking is extended to the realm of heavens and the earth. That is to say, the human ideas can cover some parts of these fields in which Allah (S.W.T.) has urged man to speculate in. According to al-Tabari this verse makes it obligatory for the believers to ponder and think in the Signs of God\(^3\). However, one should note that our thought and speculation couldn’t extend beyond certain limits. In this respect, al-Zamakhsharī made it clear that not everything is within the parameters of the human mind to

\(^1\)See the following verses of the Qur'ān: (73:18); (6:50); (30:8); (3: 191); (10:24); (59:21).


think of. Rather, there are certain things that are beyond its capacities. In particular, the Muslim mind "does not waste its time and efforts on conjecture or on matters which serve no useful purpose. In accordance with this unambiguous outlook, the Muslim mind will not debate matters of the unseen, nor will it ignore the role of reason in understanding and interpreting the articulations and purposes of wahy and putting them into practice." Saying this does not invite us to undermine the crucial role of reason in the human life. Rather it is a call to exploit the human mind at maximum. The rational behind this lies on the fact that "revelation does not stand in the way of appropriating the beneficial development of modernity, the advance in natural sciences and technology."

In a nutshell, the term "idea" could be used to mean the process as well as the pattern followed by the human mind in exercising its functions. Additionally, it is the result of our thinking and reflection i.e., knowledge and science which allow us to discover the laws and signs of God in the universe and in the human soul. With such a general analysis of the term "idea" let us now consult Bennabi’s usage of the same concept. By his account civilization in one of its aspects represents the product of an essential idea that imparts to a pre-civilized society the thrust that

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drives it onto the force front of history. Thus, this society starts formulating its system of ideas in accordance with the original pattern of its civilization. According to him, ideas constitute a system that orients the human being and human culture as well. Hence, one can note that he gave a functional and operational role to the realm of ideas. He stated that the ideas push the society to "take root in an original cultural plasma which will determine all its characteristics which distinguish it from other cultures and civilizations."\footnote{Bennabi, Mushkilat al-Afkār, Op. cit., p. 41.}

Accordingly, it seems that ideas drive the society to create its own identity and culture that will differentiate it from other societies. In other words, the realm of ideas infuses in the society the thrust that links it with an original ideal and worldview. To explain this point, Bennabi provided an example by stating that the realm of ideas is similar to a "disc" that the individual carries within his\ her herself upon his\ her birth. This "disc" varies from one society to another by some underlying chords. From the very beginning, with the emergence of a society, its "disc" is differently impressed by its culture and identity. Within this "disc", the individuals as well as generations also record their own special notes, which would harmonize with the basic notes of their ideal.\footnote{Ibid., p. 68.}

"The realm of ideas is also a "disc" which bears its constitutive notes, its archetypes:

\footnotetext[1]{Bennabi, Mushkilat al-Afkār, Op. cit., p. 41.}
\footnotetext[2]{Ibid., p. 68.}
these are but the impressed ideas. In addition, it also contains the contributions of its individual and generation: these are the expressed ideas."

Apparently, Bennabi argues that the realm of ideas consists of two important parts: "the impressed ideas" and "the expressed ideas", the former are derived from sacred or secular sources and function as patterns, rules, principles which orient and guide the society to certain values and morals. While the latter, are human in nature and they represent all sorts of ideas, methods, knowledge and intellectual contributions of the human mind in the course of its social progress. These ideas are also recorded in the realm of ideas of the society.

It should be noted here that both the impressed and expressed ideas are the result of the interaction between the human consciousness and reality in light of the sacred source. However, the impressed ideas represent in the society an ideal pattern (archetype) which motivates and activates the individual to start his historical function. For instance, in the case of Islamic civilization the impressed ideas are derived from the holly Qur’ān and Sunnah. These impressed ideas direct the human vital energy towards some new values and concepts, which orient the civilizing capacities of people in the service of the Islamic society and its objectives. In this respect, Bennabi stated that, Islamic society received, in the form of revelation, its impressed message (ideas) which was readily engraved in

\[1\text{Ibid.}, \text{p. 68.}\]
the subjectivity of the generation contemporary to Ghār Hīrā'. At the beginning, the impressed ideas had thoroughly transformed a primitive environment thus putting its vital energy within limits of a civilization. The individuals within this society became subjected to certain rules, norms and strict principles. For example, Bennabi held the view that at the material level, the impressed ideas generated new effects as well as new social results with the same means already available since the realm of objects had not yet undergone any change at least at the moment when the al-Anṣar and al-Muhājirūn were pooling together their resources in order to face the necessities of the new phase. Furthermore, at the intellectual level, it created numerous criteria and new ways of thinking in order to meet the requirements of a new organization and orientation of the activities of such a nascent society. Moreover, on the psychological and moral levels, it brought about new centers of polarization for vital energy. Bennabi further proposed that:

"Around those new centers, one could well witness the birth of incommensurate moments of greatness such as when the Muslim, in accordance with Salman al-Farisi’s advice, dug the ditch, which stopped the last Jahiliyyan wave at the foot

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1 Bennabi, Mushkilat al-Afkār, p. 71.

2 Ibid., p. 71.

3 Salman al-Farisi (d. 655) An Iranian magian who converted to Islam. He was a very experienced man in the field of religion. Particularly, Christianity and Judaism. His name was associated with the siege of al-Madinah. He was the one who invented the strategy of digging of the ditch by means of which the Muslims faced the infidels. He was one of the most important visages of the Muslim history; may Allah (S.W.T.) Be pleased with him and bless his soul.

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of al-Madinah. The paucity in the realm of objects could only allow them to make use of primitive tools to undertake a very hard and difficult task.

Examples of such new tension and effectiveness of the Islamic society can be seen in the following cases. A man kissed a woman; this was an event, which reflects how the vital energy overflowed its limits. In the new atmosphere formulated by the impressed ideas of Islam, the reminding forces in the human soul responded to the event. Consequently, the drama exploded within the conscience of the man who rushed to the Prophet (S.A.W.) to confess his sin. The answer was to clear up such a drama was but the following Qur'anic verses:

{And be constant in praying at the beginning and the end of the day, as well as during the early watches of the night: verily, good deeds drive away evils deeds: this is the reminder to all who bear God (in mind)(11:114).

Then the man asked: is this (verse) for me alone? the Prophet answered: It is for all my society. In another instance, a woman came before the Prophet (S.A.W.) to confess that she had committed the sin of adultery. The term "adultery" was no longer a simple word on one's lips as it used to be before. Rather, it condensed in it all the horror that would deeply upset the conscience.

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1 Bennabi, Mushkilat al-Afkār, p. 70.
2 Bennabi, Miṣlāḥ, p. 72.
since Islam had laid down the most harsh punishment for it: stoning to death.\textsuperscript{1}

From the above and similar crucial examples, it is quite clear that as Bennabi put it, "such a strained environment, the impressed ideas put their sacred notes in all the expressed ideas."\textsuperscript{2} To sum up, the realm of ideas as Bennabi viewed it, contains three important elements: the sacred or secular source of ideas, the impressed ideas derived from the source, and the expressed ideas derived from the impressed ideas and human mind as well. The role of this realm is, on the one hand, to direct the whole civilizing capacities of the society towards the realization of a civilization and on the other hand, it is used as a criterion for measuring the level of the development of the human society. That is to say, if the society enjoys an original and effective realm of ideas, then, it will be able to thrust onto a civilizing process. On the contrary, if the society does not enjoy an original and effective realm of ideas or it enjoys an ineffective one, then it will not be capable of functioning orderly. Finally, Bennabi affirmed that any disorder in the realm of ideas\textsuperscript{3} will cause problems in the whole movement of a civilization. Therefore, he emphasized the importance of the relation between the impressed ideas and the expressed ideas on the one hand and between these two and the original source; namely the revealed text on the other hand.

\textsuperscript{1}Bennabi, \textit{Mushkilat al-Af\textbar{}, p. 72.}
\textsuperscript{2}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 73.
According to him, this text is the main source of the Islamic realm of ideas which is used as one of the crucial elements of civilizational change...and as principles and values which activate and orient the civilizing process.¹ Thus, knowing the structure and understanding the function of the realm of ideas can be of significance in following the social evolution of a civilization, as we shall see.

C- REALM OF OBJECTS

If the realm of persons represents the human model of a civilization and if the realm of ideas formulates its vision and motivation, the realm of objects provides the practical channels, things and instruments needed in the civilizational movement. Thus, the equipment and objects, which man use for his development, constitute another important element in the development of society and in the formulation of a civilization.

Before one proceeds further, let us consult dictionaries to see the given meanings affixed to the term "objects". Obviously, one should note that the translators of Bennabi’s works used different terms to translate what he called “‘Alam al Ashiya” such as things, objects and commodities. The term “object” may connote “a perceptible body or things”² or “something perceptible by one or more

of the senses, especially by vision or touch: a material thing."\(^1\) Additionally, the word "thing" may denote "matter, a body, object"\(^2\) or "the real or concrete substance of an entity. An entity existing in space and time...the equipment needed for an activity or a special purpose."\(^3\)

On the basis of the above definitions, we can note that the term "object" or "thing" can be used to mean the equipment, channels and instruments that we need in our activities. However, these definitions do not provide explanations about the variety and diversity of the objects on the one hand and their relations as well as their usage on the other hand. Furthermore, they do not explain the nature of the psychosocial relation between objects and persons in the course of a civilizing process. All these points are to be seen in Bennabi’s view of this concept. Bennabi postulated that this realm of objects is significant at two levels; firstly at the level of providing the material needs for the civilizing movement of the society. Secondly, at the conceptual and analytical level, i.e., the level of the interrelation between this realm and the other two realms that of person and that of ideas. This second level is very important in Bennabi’s view, precisely the psychosocial relationship between persons and ideas on the one hand and objects on the other hand.

In other words, one should analyze the importance of objects not only at the material level but also at the level of their relations with the human psychology and culture in a given phase of development. Bennabi argues that it is not the amount and size of the objects that reflects the development or the degeneration of the society. Rather, it is the will and capacity of the society in directing its objects, whatever the amount, in a civilizing process. That is to say, it is the quality of persons and the originality of ideas, which influences the realm of objects, and uses it in an efficacious and proper way. For instance, when the early Islamic society started its civilizing process the realm of its objects was simple and poor but it was able to carry out its civilizing mission. This is due to the link between those simple objects and the new human personality on the one hand and the new inspiring realm of ideas derived from the revelation on the other hand. Bennabi asserted that the objects of that society were consisting of the sword, the spear and stake, the quiver, the bow and arrows, the camel, the horse.\(^1\) However, the early Islamic society was able to face the challenges of the two civilized societies, it invaded and vanquished in Egypt, Persia and the Sham (i.e. Syria, Palestine and Lebanon). On the contrary, we can examine the realm of objects of this society six centuries later when it started crumbling in the decadence, we will find that it had at its disposal the richest libraries of the world at that time.\(^2\) In addition to its rich and complicated realm of objects of various kinds and types.


\(^2\)*Ibid.*, 37.
This comparison demonstrates how the material level of the realm of objects is unable to provide a satisfying justification to the decline of Islamic civilization.

Accordingly, Bennabi held the view that the material aspect of the realm of objects is nothing if it is not systematically related to the realm of ideas and realm of persons as one shall see. Because "the three realms are in an interactive\(^1\) relation among each other\(^2\) in the course of the social movement of civilization.

In a nutshell, the concept of the three realms provides a far-reaching tool to follow the content of the human activities as well as the function of persons, ideas and objects in the social context. It is clear from the above that one should formulate a comprehensive view of the three realms in order to utilize them as a tool of analysis of the movement of the individual and society as well.

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III- CONCEPT OF THE THREE PSYCHO
SOCIAL AGES OF A SOCIETY

Having generally defined the meaning and the importance of the concept of
the three realms; that of persons, ideas and objects, it is now the best moment to
examine how for that Bennabi introduced another tool of analysis with reference
to the previous concept. In fact, he developed the concept of the three realms
from being an essential ingredient of any social activity into a psycho-social
criterion for measuring the level of development of a society and its civilization in
a given moment of its evolution.

After all, by the concept of the three ages of society and its civilization,
Bennabi underlined two main points; firstly the nature and quality of values and
psychosocial factors which influence the movement of society and its civilization
in the different positions of its evolution. Secondly, the level of increases or
decreases in the values of the development of the society and its civilization. That
is to say, the concept of the three ages could help in examining the quality and
nature of the factors and reasons which cause the progress or the decline of
society. Additionally, it provides a criterion for determining the psycho-social age
of the society. To explore these ideas, Bennabi remarked that the human society in
its evolution passes through three different ages, the age of objects, the age of
persons and the age of ideas respectively. He argues that there are similarities between the psychosocial evolution of the individual and society. According to him, a child is an isolated human being whose integration in a social life is under way. In order for him to integrate in a society and to become a social member, he should pass through some phases and follow certain steps, as we shall explain.

A- THE THREE PSYCHO-SOCIAL AGES OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE INDIVIDUAL

After all, when the child commences his first step as a new born, the three realms of objects, persons and ideas are arranged around him. In other words, "from the moment of coming into the world the human baby is governed by the socio-cultural environment." However, his consciousness is still unable to understand the order and function of these realms and environment. They do not represent to him except an ensemble of strange and alien elements. "Things, figures and ideas that interact around him are therefore incomprehensible to him." In a next step he starts feeling around himself a realm of things and means represented by his hand, his fingers, his sucking as well as the lamp hanging over his cradle.

Bennabi, debates that at this phase, the child is still incapable of constructing relations with the realm of persons in which he does not even recognize the face of his mother who, for him, is nothing¹ but the nourishing breast that a feeding-bottle would easily replace, had the mother disappeared because of a misfortune. In the same phase, the child is unable even to recognize himself as an integral entity with a capacity of awareness and consciousness. At this age, “the child tries to discover the world around him through his mouth.”²

In a next development as his experience develops in the realm of objects, his eyes start discerning certain faces, he recognizes the face of his mother, then the face of his father as well as those of his brothers and sisters. At this moment the child begins constituting a kind of awareness of these strange faces. It is his first step in the realm of persons. Here, as Bennabi stated one should note that “his mental development and his social behavior are being shaped according to the social norms and values of those with whom he has contact”³ That is to say, “the human infant receiving many varied kinds of communication and learning from his environment and most of all from his parents and especially the mother.”⁴

³Ibid., p. 123.
Accordingly, this child still at this moment is unable to create a state of ease about this realm. For instance, when this child is of three or four years old, he is still holds the same feeling. As a matter of fact, if we leave him alone near the doorstep of the family’s house we can see the signs of fear and wonderment because of the presence of the passers-by whom he is not familiar with.\(^1\) In fact, as Bennabi argues, this child even at the age of six, the day of his enrollment in the school represents for him a terrible test within the realm of persons totally unfamiliar. Accordingly, the child will gradually follow his integrating process, little by little until he captures the essence of his social integration. “Thus, the infant’s socialization is determined, not only by the genetic material and its potentialities, the racial memories, but also what we commonly define as those socio-cultural traditions that have been handed down generation after generation, centuries after centuries.”\(^2\)

According to Bennabi, whatever the time taken in the process of integration and sociability, the child must follow this order. He will first discover the realm of objects, next to it, he will discern the realm of persons and finally he will enter the realm of ideas. Bennabi, explained this point in the following passage:


"The process of the child’s integration in the society is simultaneously biological and logical. It thus embraces his three ages:¹
- The age in which he spontaneously discovers the realm of things² by playing with his fingers and his thumb.
- The age in which he gradually discovers the realm of persons by discerning the face of his mother.
- The age in which he finally discovers the realm of ideas."³

This is almost the general picture of the integrating process of the child in the social life. Before one proceeds further, it is significant to note that Bennabi was concerned with the integrating process in its third age. By his account, the discovery of the realm of ideas is very important because it represents the age of maturity and full integration into the social life. He argues "that the ideas play a major role in modifying individual's behavior and appearance."⁴

Bennabi debates, it is the last discovery that is significant in this process. It is a crucial step in the process of his social integration because it makes him able to take root in an original cultural reality. In this stage, the child undergoes an important psychological transformation, which vests him in a new cultural horizon. The latter, governs his life by new principles and rules which will orient his

activities and behaviors in this milieu. Thus, as Bennabi put it "altering his psychic being, this discovery of the realm of ideas will transform him even at the physical level." Generally speaking, this is the picture of the integrating process of a child in a socio-cultural reality that will provide for him all conditions and requirements to become a part of this culture with its specific characteristics. However, one should note that once the integrating process reaches the top of its productivity and maturity, an opposite process will start to reverse the system of values and the cultural norms in the life of this being. That is the disintegrating process in which the human being is following an opposite course of transformation that reverses the entire movement of his first integration. Bennabi argues that the first step of the above process will be carried on throughout all the stages of the individual's life-maturity, old age, and extreme old age- in such a manner as to be gradually transformed into a process of disintegration. Bennabi stated:

"At the age of senility, the individual seems to reverse his movement thus going back over his psychological ages. He will successively quit:
- The realm of ideas thus losing every creative power,
- The realm of persons out of indifference or misanthropy and
- The realm of objects out of feebleness and total withdrawal. Likewise, he breathes his last at the end of a process alluded to by the Holy Qur'ān: [and then, after (a period of)

It is quite clear that Bennabi is of the view that the human being undergoes both the integration and disintegration process. Accordingly, what is crucial to underscore here, is the change which occurs in the life of the individual in the course of his shifting from one phase to the next and vice versa. This shift from the state of weakness and isolation to the state of maturity and sociability reflects the significance of the whole process. It shows the impacts of the process and its social significance. Every step in the life of the individual, whether he moves forward in the integration process or moves downward in the disintegration process, is recorded and manifested in the course of his own history.

B- THE THREE PSYCHO-SOCIAL AGES OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF A SOCIETY

Taking the foregoing discussion into consideration, Bennabi attempted to implement his theory of the development of the individual on the movement of evolution of the society and its civilization. According to him, there is a resemblance between the individual\(^2\) and society in this regard. However, we


should underscore that the "transition and passage from one age to another in the society is not as clear as in the life of the child."\[^{1}\]

The matter of the truth is that society in its psychosocial \[^{2}\] evolution undergoes the same "three ages; the age of the objects, the age of the persons, and the age of the ideas."\[^{3}\] At a more general level human society experiences in its psychosocial development three different ages of transformation, in the first age that of its childhood, society formulates its judgments and decisions in accordance with the criteria imposed by the realm of objects. In this age the nature and quality of its judgments are subjected to the primitive needs of man and basically related to the world of his senses and relies more on the tangible reality which vests him in the realm of things. However, in the second age mankind forms its judgments in accordance with the standards of a human model or example. That is to say, it comes from the realm of persons and not from that of objects. Here, the person dominates over the human life because of his value in the human mind. People in this age depend on the human model, which provides for them an intellectual authority to be followed, or a model to be imitated. This is the age in which humans are dependent on the realm of objects and, therefore, ideas should find support from the realm of persons.


In other words, the realm of idea is still not free from the influence of the realm of objects and that of persons. For instance, in this age it is difficult to introduce an idea without relating it to other realms and particularly that of persons. In a precise word, the ideas are not free from the tendency of the material embodiment and personification. They should be embodied in a person's name in order to be recognized and accepted. Whereby the idea is always associated with the realm of persons. Accordingly, once mankind reaches its maturity, precisely its third age; that of ideas, the ideas become self-grounded. They do not need any support from neither the realm of objects nor the realm of persons.

Bennabi held the view that this is why we found the Holy Qur'ān warning against considering the personality of the Messenger of God (S.A.W.) an embodiment of the Islamic truth in the verse:

\[\text{Muhammad is no more than a Messenger: many were the Messengers that passed away before him. If he died or were slain, will you then turn back on your heels? If any did turn back on his heels, not the least harm will he do to Allah} (3: 144).\]

Expressing his view in this respect, Bennabi stated that “really this verse was revealed as an impulsion which pushed that primitive society to which was

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sent forward from the age of objects to the age of ideas."¹ That is to say, "the wisdom behind this verse is to show the danger of embodying the ideas in the figure of any given person."² In other words, human society in the pre-civilized stage passes through the age of objects in which all its actions and activities are under the control of the thingness mentality.³ The culture dominating in this stage is of objects' spirit and orientation, but once the society passes to the civilized stage under the orientation of an idea, it reaches the peak of its balance and equilibrium. At this moment the three realms function in harmony and consistency.

Accordingly the objects, persons and ideas are all centered on the original pattern and ideal brought by the sacred or secular sources. This balance pushes the society forward in the course of its civilization and under the orientation of an idea. I deem it of significance to mention a slightly different version of this point on Ibn Khaldūn's work. In one of the revealing section of the Muqaddimah, entitled (Dynasties have a natural life span like individual), Ibn Khaldun attempted to examine the similarity between the development of the dynasty with that of the individual. After a full discussion, Ibn Khaldūn stated that:

"In this way, the life (span) of a dynasty corresponds to the life span of an individual;"

³ Ibid., p. 153.
it grows up and passes into an age of stagnation and hence into retrogression."

Notwithstanding, the difference in the context and terminology used to explain the similarity between the development of the individual and society, both Ibn Khaldun and Bennabi agreed about the fact that there is a process of integration and disintegration in the life of the individual and society as well. Accordingly, this process influences the psychosocial evolution of both individual and society. Thus, this evolution is recorded in history in the form of two axes one is of the development of civilization and another one is of its retrogression and decline.

C- DISEQUILIBRIUM IN THE THREE REALMS AND THE PHENOMENON OF DECLINE

In relation with the previous discussion, Bennabi directed us to examine the problem of the disequilibrium in the three realms and the emergence of the phenomenon of the decline in history. The following passage explains the state in which the three realms function properly:

"In general, the characteristics of action, both at the individual and collective levels, depend upon the internal relation among the

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parameters of the cultural world: the objects, the persons and the ideas whose interference in the society's activities are determined, at any instant, by an internal dialectics that corresponds to a specific relationship among the objects, persons and ideas integrated in the weft of action. Such an instant is but a matter of normality and balance in the course of that dialectics."

In this state the society enjoys an original and effective civilizing process, particularly, "when one a person becomes a correct and original embodiment of the ideas, as in the case of the Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.)." However, Bennabi further argues that in certain moments the interaction and interference among the three realms leads to the domination of one realm over the other. In this case the society shifts to the third position, the post-civilized position. Consequently, it moves to the age of objects and impulses into the world of decline and disintegration. Accordingly, it turns back in its evolution from the realm of ideas, then the realm of persons and once it reaches the realm of objects it ends its civilizing process and enters anew onto the stage of backwardness. Bennabi explained the phenomenon of the decline in the following passage:

"There is a certain disequilibrium that characterizes this particular moment of the historical development of a society thus denoting an abnormal phase in the dialectics"

of its cultural universe. Such an imbalance reflects some excess, and every excess is but a kind of despotism to the detriment of the social activities.\textsuperscript{1}

An observer has explained the above point stating that "following this theory of ages, the activity of the society is to be seen as an integrated activity whereby the realm of objects commingle with the two realms of persons and ideas. "The structure of this activity, albeit primitives, necessarily encompasses the motives, on the one hand, and ways of execution, on the other, motives of a mental nature and practical ways of technical nature. In spite of this intermingling and interference, one of the three realms would emerge as dominant over the other two at certain stages of development, and this is what distinguishes one society from another in modes of thinking and behavior."\textsuperscript{2} Further more, this picture of domination of one realm can, in fact, assist us to determine the historical position of the society. That is to say, to know the stage and the age of the development or decline of the society. Hence, we will be capable of addressing its problems and dealing with its situations. On the other hand, when the society ends its cyclical transition from the age of things forward to the age of ideas passing through the age of persons, it returns back in the same cycle but in a reversed movement. It moves downward from the age of ideas to the age of objects. Bennabi underlined this psychosocial changes occurring in the life of the society. He mentioned that:


“Just as it is the case with the individual, so too would the process at the society’s level follow its course up to the point of inversion and regression. Then ideas would freeze, the movement would become a backward one, and the Islamic society would turn back reversing its course by taking the steps backward hence going over its previous ages.”

In a nutshell the concept of the three ages of development of the society and its civilization can be used as an important tool of analysis in the method of approaching civilization. For instance, Bennabi debates that the contemporary Islamic society is living in the post-civilized stage after being civilized for ten centuries. Expressing it in a slightly different way, Bennabi said “at the end, the process is locked up and the Muslim society, turning back, finally finds that, centuries ago, it entered the pre-civilized stage.” In fact, if we utilize the concept of the three ages, then, we will note that Islamic civilization is presently living in the age of objects. Thus, we can underline the nature of its problems as well as the characteristics of its present situation. Hence, it will be easy for us to treat it and introduce solutions for its problems. Bennabi argues that the concept of the three ages could also assist in knowing the nature and quality of the problem faced by the contemporary human civilization.

2Bennabi, Mushkilat al-Afsâr, p. 40.
He stated that "this (concept) constitutes a tool to analyze not only the Muslim society’s current situation from the psycho-social point of view, but we can consider it as a tool to analyze the present situation of the civilized society."\footnote{Ibid., p. 86.}

In keeping with this a crucial question can be posed. If we assume that the historical action or in a precise word, civilization is the product of the influence and function of the three social realms; namely persons, objects and ideas, then the question would be: Why the Islamic society does have the three realms but it is still degenerating?. To answer this question, Bennabi developed another important tool of analysis. Namely, the social relations network which will be discussed in the next element.
IV- CONCEPT OF THE SOCIAL RELATIONS NETWORK

To begin with, Bennabi debates that the three realms; that of objects, persons and that of ideas correspond to each other at two integral levels, firstly that of the relations within each and every one of them. This internal relation helps in understanding the structure and function of each realm as well as determining its importance and role in the civilizing process. Secondly, the relation within the integral body of the three realms. This integration represents the sum total relations which reflect the organization and function of the entire body of the three realms in a given moment and stage of the development of a civilization.

Taken together, these three realms do not function separately from one another; they are rather incorporated in a concerted action and follow certain norms. As a matter of fact, this interrelatedness represents, in the social context, what we may call a civilization. In fact, Bennabi was very concerned with the incorporating process "whose pattern and vision is determined by ideological archetypes which originate from the (realm of ideas) so as to be applied by means of the (realm of objects) to achieve objectives specified by the (realm of persons)."¹ Accordingly, any human action which consists of persons, objects and

ideas is necessarily the outcome of the incorporating process which will join together the three realms and manifest them in the form of a united action within the social context. Therefore, as Bennabi put it, no civilization or historical action\(^1\) can be formulated without the existence of a "body of relations which are necessary to link together the ingredients of each of the three realms as well as the latter to one another so as to mould them into an integrated whole in order to perform a concerted action."\(^2\) It is also necessary to keep in mind that this incorporating process of the three realms has its determined purpose that will be tested in the course of the social action. Therefore, once the process achieves its purpose it manifests itself in the form of a civilization\(^3\) Bennabi debates that the entire process logically implies "the existence of a fourth realm which represents the sum total of the necessary social relations or what we call the social relations network."\(^4\)

Apparently, the social relations network\(^5\) is an important element in the historical action that aspires toward constructing a civilization. According to Bennabi, the three realms cannot function in the absence of the relations network. The latter, is on the one hand, the product of the function of a given society in the

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course of its transformation and on the other hand, it is an important tool for analyzing the evolution of the society and its civilization, as we shall see in the next element.

A- DEFINITION OF A SOCIETY\(^1\): THE CONCEPT OF MOTION AND SOCIAL RELATIONS

Examining the meaning and function of a society is requested for, at least, two reasons; firstly in order to understand the entire process of synthesizing the three realms which formulate the heart of the social action. Secondly, to examine the role of social relations network in constructing a civilization as well as analyzing its problems and stages of development.

In fact, society can be considered as the living womb in which any civilization emerges and develops. This social womb contains the conditions and needs demanded in the process of generating a social life that allows every individual to install himself and work as a dynamic member of the society. To understand this point, one should examine the meaning of the term "society". In keeping with this, Bennabi defined society with reference to his general framework.

After all, he did not accept totally the definition provided by some sociologists of his time. According to him, it is not fully agreeable to say that society, in its simplest literary meaning, is the accumulation of individuals who have common habits and customs, live under the rule of the same system of law and share mutual interests.\footnote{Bennabi, \textit{Milā}, Op. cit., p. 13.} I deem it better to examine some definitions of the word "society" before we analyze Bennabi's opinion. In a broad sense, the term "society" means "the totality of social relationships among human beings. A group of human beings broadly distinguished from other groups by mutual interests, participation in characteristic relationships, shared institutions and common culture."\footnote{\textit{The American Heritage Dictionary}, Op. cit., p. 1711.} According to the sociological point of view, society can be defined as "a group of people living in a given territory who share a culture and interact with people of that territory more than with people of other territory."\footnote{John, Ferranell, \textit{Sociology a Global Perspective}, Wadsworth Inc., (California: Belmont, 1992), p. 262.}

In another sociological definition, society is "the whole complex network of human relationships within large-scale groups or collectivities, which share a common culture, and way of life."\footnote{Tom, Campbell, \textit{Seven Theories of Human Society}, (New York: Clavendon Press Oxford, 1981), p. 13.} In a further illustration, Campbell argues that a society "is constituted by the rules or norms which are expressed in its moral and
legal codes, social conventions and religious percepts.\footnote{1} Apparently, the above definitions seem to be more descriptive\footnote{2} and do not provide any interpretation related to the historical function of the society and its internal structure as well as its organization in the course of history. In other words, these definitions do not tell us about the function and dynamism of this living social womb. Therefore, we should define society with reference to its social movement and historical function in time and space. This is because, as Bennabi perceived, the gathering of individuals whose internal relations have not been changed and transformed in relation to time do not fall into the category of the historical societies meant in his analysis. In his own words, Bennabi stated:

\begin{quote}
"Any group that does not develop and adjust in the course of time is therefore excluded from the dialectical definition given here to the term ‘society’.\footnote{3}
\end{quote}

As far as can be seen in the body of the above passage, the definition of the term ‘society’\footnote{4} should be related to the concept of motion\footnote{5}, change and time.

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\footnote{1}{Campbell, \textit{Seven Theories}, Op. cit., p. 26.}
\footnote{2}{Zaki, \textit{Malik Bennabi}, op. cit., p. 114.}
\footnote{3}{Bennabi, \textit{Mi'\=a\=d}, Op. cit., p. 14.}
\footnote{4}{In another important definition a society is usually considered to be a system on a higher level of organization than the individual organisms or even the social groups, that are the components of that society. See, Anthony F.C. Wallace, \textit{Culture and Personality}, (New York, Random House, 1970),p. 22.}
\footnote{5}{Al-Qurayshi, \textit{Al-Taqy\=ir}, Op. cit., p. 212.}
\end{flushright}
In other words, any human group that does not adjust itself with reference to time and history, it cannot be considered a society in Bennabi’s method. It is a mere agglomeration of the individuals whose association does not generate tangible modification in its function or structure. In line with this, Bennabi suggested a definition of society that gives more consideration to the concept of motion and time.

Bennabi asserted that a society is a human group that starts a historical mission from a certain point and moment to which we may give the title of (a birth). However, we should note that the birth process, in its essence, reflects a systematic form of collective life as well as indicating the starting point of a social transformation of the human group and its social context.\(^1\) By his account, “this figure of life comes into existence in the form of a new order of relations among the individuals of a certain group.”\(^2\) This new order of relations is the motor of the entire process of the change that will be undergone by this group of individuals. Hence, this group will start changing itself to cope with the new principles imposed by its new world view as well as it will direct all its civilizing capacities to achieve the purpose of its birth in history. From the above discussion, we are led to maintain that society is:

\(^{1}\textit{Ibid.}, \text{p. 212.}\)

"A group of human beings which constantly modifies its social traits by yielding itself the instruments of change, and which perceives the objectives it seeks through a process of transformation."

That is to say, human group impels into the world society once it commences moving and changing itself. Accordingly, its movement should influence the structure and organization of the group and adjust it with reference to the new pattern of its march in history. In Bennabi view, this fact coincides "in the historical perspectives, with the moment a civilization makes its advent." Taking into consideration the previous analysis, we can underline two important points; firstly we should note the importance of the notion of motion which implies change and modification in the life of the group. Secondly, we should underline the significance of the collective relations of the human group. This social relations network is "the fundamental basic of any social or economic transformation". The quality and function of these relations can be used as an indicator to measure the level of development in the entire diagram of the evolution of the society and its civilization.

1Bennabi, ميلاد, p. 15.
C- TYPES OF HUMAN ASSOCIATION AND BIRTH OF A SOCIETY

It is clear from the previous analysis that a human group cannot be considered as a society in Bennabi’s view unless it undergoes a systematic process of birth. The latter, would provide us with an important explanation of the historical role of the concept of motion and that of the collective relations. To put it in a slightly different way, we can say that a human group before the event of birth lives in a pre-civilized position and its psychosocial values are at the age of objects. However, once a process of birth takes place into history, a new civilization will emerge to fulfill a civilizational mission. Thus, all activities and achievements of the society are in their major part due its motion and its collective relations network. To attain an understanding of this point, one should examine the process of birth of a society in history. This point leads us to analyze the types of human association and the way of their birth in history. In this respect, Bennabi explained to us the general picture of the birth of a society by introducing his view on the types of human association. He noted that there are two types of human association; firstly what he called the natural or the primitive society and secondly the historical or civilizational association. According to him, the first type of human association is characterized by the lack of motion. That is to say, it is incapable of modifying in a tangible way the characteristics of its personality since it came into existence. Examples of such type are to be found in the African tribe
of the pre-colonial era as well as the Arab tribe of the pre-Islamic age. By his account, these societies are mainly static¹ and inactive because they were unable to change their cultural and social conditions throughout the course of history. In other words, they are still living in the pre-civilized position which means that they did not undergo a process of civilizational birth. Thus, they lack the character of motion and the character of collective relations network. On the other hand, we have the historical dynamic society, that is the society that has been subject to the laws of change. In Bennabi view, this type is very important for two main reasons; firstly because it is able to transform its characteristics and personality with reference to time and space. Secondly, because it provides for us a field of analysis of the present human society and particularly the Islamic society. The birth of this type of association may be manifested in two different ways. It may, from the beginning, be made up of new elements; an example of this type can be seen in the early historical societies in the Agricultural Revolution of the NSA² While, the second type may also be constructed by elements which have already contributed to the formation of a previous society whose ingredients disintegrated because of its oldness or because of its expansion thus being ready to enter into the constitution of a new society.³

²New Stone Age, is called also Neolithic Age. It is one of the chronological division of old world prehistory. This division was made by Dane, Christian Jurgensen Thomsen(1788-1865). The other subdivision of the Stone Age into Old and New Stone Age was given by Sir John Lubbock.
³Bennabi, Milad, p. 8.
This type may come into existence in the form of a migration that would transfer the essential elements from their mother-society. An example of this type can be seen in the migration that was at the origin of the present American society. This society has borrowed in its birth the elements of another civilization that was in state of its expansion; this was the case of the European society in the 16th century. Another example can be seen in the migration that was at the origin of the Eskimo society whose elements were derived from the Sino Mongolian society of the far East. Moreover, we can see another type of birth in case of the Roman society, which borrows the remnants of the Gallic, and Carthagienian societies that disappeared. In this kind of birth, one witnesses a restructuring process of the previous elements.

Before one proceeds further, a point of merit suggests itself. In all types of the historical association mentioned above, one deals with a process, which have its conditions and constituents. In other words, it is a process that follows a defined scheme. In a broad sense, Bennabi held the view that there are in this scheme three important elements, which affects the process of birth. Namely:

"The historical source of the process of perpetual change.

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1Zaki, Malik Bennabi, p. 115.
3Ibid., p. 8.
The context which may be transformed, through the above-mentioned process, from the pre-social state to the actual social state. The laws which govern the process of transformation.  

Referring to the previous analysis, Bennabi asserted that if one takes into consideration the first point of the historical scheme, i.e., the historical source of the process, he said, "we find that the historical type of society is also subject to degrees of variation originating from the historical circumstances of its birth whence it follows that there are two kinds of historical societies." The first type is the historical society which comes into existence as a response to the challenge posed by the natural environment. Bennabi called this kind of society the geographical type of society; an example of such a society can be seen in the present American society.

The second kind of the historical society which comes into existence as a response to the appeal of certain ideals or moral values. This is what Bennabi called the ideological society; an example of such a kind is the Islamic society that gave birth as a result of the driving force of the Islamic ideal. Other examples can be seen in the "original European society for it was in general a result of the Christian idea. The present Soviet and Chinese societies can also be included in

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1Bennabi, Milād, p. 9.  
It is clear, from the preceding that the event of birth of a society reflects the two previous concepts, which we have already analyzed. However, for the purpose of the unity of analysis, the researcher will recall those concepts. It was mentioned that the event of birth implies the presence of the concept of motion and that of the collective relations network. If one peers deep into these kinds of the historical society in general and that of the Islamic society in particular, one can note that the two concepts are extremely demanded in the process of birth. As a matter of fact, Bennabi explained this point in the following passage:

"Human society bears in itself specific characteristics, which enable it to preserve its feature and carry its mission in history. This fix element represents the essence of the social being for it determines the age of a society as well as its stability over time; it also enables it to face all the circumstances of its history. This essence is eventually manifested in the social relationship network\(^2\), which links the members of the society to one another. More importantly, it confers guidance and orientation upon the various aspects of the individuals' activities toward a general function, which is the very mission of a society."\(^3\)

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\(^1\)Ibid., p. 10.


This is the important position and role of the social relations network in the event of birth of a historical society. Thus, it can be considered as a prior condition in the entire process. In line with this, Bennabi held the view that the construction of this social relations network, even in its preliminary stage, is the most significant indicator for the birth of a society in history. To put it in a slightly different way, "it is known that the first task a society carries out in the course of transforming itself is conditional upon the completion of the network of its relation." Accordingly, one can assert that the social relationship network is the first historical task the realization of which a society carries out upon its birth. As a matter of fact, the Islamic society represented an adequate example in this regard. It was clear that the first task which the Islamic society undertook was to draw the pact which laid down the basis for the social relations network between al-Muhajirun and al-Ansar. Bennabi, argues that the Hijra can be considered as the starting point in Islamic civilization, because it manifested the first accomplishment of the Muslim society in history, that is to say, the formulation of its social relations network.

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5 Hijrah means is leave one's homeland for another land for the sake of one's religion. Emigration is a distinctly religious act, and that is the Qur'ān often speaks of it as emigration "in the way of God"...some verses generally bear reference to the Madinan emigration. See, Mir, *Dictionary of Qur'ānic Terms*, Op. cit., p. 63.
D- SOCIAL RELATIONS NETWORK AS A TOOL OF ANALYSIS

The previous analysis leads us to the point that relations network can be utilized to measure the level of development or decline of a given civilization. The present discussion will explore this concept and examine in which way this network can be used to approach the level of the development of a civilization. Here again, one must remind the reader about the process of integrating the realm of ideas, persons and objects with the social relations network. It has been said that the three realms cannot function as elements of a civilizing process unless a social relations network is formulated.

In keeping with this idea, Bennabi claimed that any civilization starts its march in history even before the emergence and completeness of its three realms. In fact, civilization commences its function immediately after the construction of its social relations network. At the moment of formulating this network, the realm of ideas is in its simple and preliminary stages and its world of objects is poor and simple, but its realm of persons start changing and integrating in the new order of relations. Bennabi stated that:

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“Whenever we find, in a given place, at a certain time, an activity that constantly assemble human beings, ideas and objects, this is but an indication that civilization has already started in that specific framework and that the synthesis thereof has been successfully achieved within the realm of persons. It is these specific relations within the realm of persons, which provide the necessary links between the ideas and the objects.”

It is clear in the body of the above passage that the formation of the realm of persons\(^2\) is considered as one of the pre-conditions for the emergence of the social relations network. For instance, Islamic civilization started evolving in history before the completion of its realm of ideas and that of objects. However one saw that its realm of persons underwent a deep process of transformation led to the construction of the first group of companion who carried out the mission of spreading Islam and paving the way for the establishment of the Muslim society. To put it differently, we can assert that the emergence of a civilization in history in its beginning is due to the transformation within the realm of persons that will generate the social relations network. Therefore, one can utilize this process as an indicator for the advent of a civilization.


The preceding excerpts emphasize the importance of the link between the realm of persons and the social relations network. But in another instance one can see the significance of the link between the realm of ideas and the social relations network. To attain an understanding of this point, Bennabi argues that the wealth and richness of a society is not measured by the quantity of objects or commodities which it possesses. Rather, it is measured in terms of the ideas at its disposal and control.¹

In this key explanation of the author, we are given an interesting view of the importance of ideas in the social life. According to him, ideas are the true wealth of the society. To explain this point he provided some examples. By his account, if a hard and adverse problem betides a society, such as a flood or a war which may completely destroy its realm of things and commodities or at least caused a temporarily state of losing control over it, this society is capable of overcoming its problems if its realm of ideas is saved.²

Bennabi asserted that "the crisis would be more despoiling had such a society at the same time lost command over its (realm of ideas). However, if it succeeds in saving (its ideas), it would have thus saved everything for it would be

¹Bennabi, Miṣād, Op. cit., p. 34.
²Ibid., p. 34.
able to reformulate the realm of objects."¹ In other words, the wealth of ideas represents an important source that defends and helps the society in the periods of hardship and adversity. For instance, during the WWT, Germany underwent such hard circumstances and so did Russia to a lesser degree. In this event, both societies found themselves losing almost their realm of objects. However, they were able in a short period of time to reconstruct their realm of objects. This was largely due to the remaining reservoir of the living ideas that they possessed.

The preceding general account of the realm of ideas is understood only within the entire context of the society. In other words, the realm of ideas which saves the society in the critical situation must be understood with reference to the social relations network. It is the relation within the realm of persons which allow the above mentioned societies to regain their balance and stability. In fact, the realm of ideas cannot function in an isolated context. Rather, it must be vested in a living context that will activate and orient its potencies in such a manner that makes it creative and effective. This living context is precisely the social relations network. In this respect, Bennabi ascertained that:

"This task of reconstruction is itself a united action that a society undertakes. One has seen from the above that the accomplishment of such an achievement is impossible in the absence of a network of social relations that would regulate and

¹Ibid., p. 34.
orient it towards definite goals. As a result, it follows that wealth in terms of ideas alone is not sufficient as the history of the Muslim society has shown us in two different instances."

In the first instance, when the Muslim society entered the world history in the 7th century AD, its (realm of ideas) was still in its earliest stages in comparison with the civilized societies it invaded, for example, in Egypt, Persia and the Sham. Ibn Khaldun noted this phenomenon by saying:

"They were allowed to take possession of the realms of the Persians and the Byzantines who were the greatest dynasties in the world at that time, as well as the realms of the Turks in the East, of the European Christians and Berbers in the West, and of the Goth in Spain."\(^2\)

However, in the second instance, six centuries later when it started crumbling down in the world of decline, this society found itself a prey of decadence and backwardness in spite of having at its disposal the richest libraries of the world at that time\(^3\) This account lead us to hold the view that ideas alone cannot justify the development or the decadence of a civilization.

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\(^1\) Bennabi, *Milād*, p. 34.


Rather, we should link them with the creative context provided by the social relations network. Bennabi attested that:

"The efficacy of ideas is therefore dependent upon the social relations network, i.e. we cannot think of a harmonious action incorporating the persons, ideas and objects without these indispensable social relations. Such an action is efficient and effective inasmuch as the network of relations approaches firmness and compactness. Accordingly, if the wealth of a society is to be measured by the amount of its ideas on the one hand, it must be seen in association with the network of relations on the other."¹

In this important passage, Bennabi provided another important concept, which can be used, within the context of the social relations network, as an indicator for the development or decline of civilization. He mentioned the firmness and compactness of the social relations network. In fact, these relations reach the optimum of their development and effectiveness once they become stable and strong. That is to say, the realm of persons is in its perfect state in which every member works for the interest of the group and vice versa. On the other hand, once the social relations network degenerates and corrupts, the civilization starts declining and disintegrating.

¹Ibid., p. 35.
Taking the last point into consideration, one can debate that the evolution and movement of a given civilization is recorded in the social relations network. Any change in the contents, directions, objectives and means of civilization, will be recorded qualitatively and quantitatively in its social relations network. In line with this, Bennabi asserted that:

"When the strain of the network's texture becomes less tense\(^1\) in such a manner that it is no longer capable of carrying out the mutual activity effectively, this is an indication that the society is in a pathological state and that it is on the way to its fatal end. If the network is entirely dissolved, this would exclusively be a declaration of the corruption of that society."\(^2\)

At this juncture of analysis, one has determined two important states in the development of the social relations network, the state of compactness and firmness which reflects its effectiveness and vitality. In addition to the state of relaxation and disintegration which represents its inertia and decline. These two states can be seen in the evolution of a civilization as such. The former represents the civilized position, while the second pictures the post-civilized position. Moreover, Bennabi, underlined another important state which we may call (the pathological state) that comes as the result of hidden and continuous maladies

which will deteriorate little by little, the body and organization of the social relations network. Bennabi, described this situation as follows:

"Before a society is entirely disintegrated, diseases creep into the social body in the form of breakdowns and disruptions in its relations network due both to the quantitative and qualitative reasons mentioned above. This pathological situation may last for so long or short time before reaching its ultimate end, i.e. total degeneration. Such is the slow process of degeneration as it creeps into the social body. All the causes of disintegration exclusively lie, however, in the network of social relations."  

From the above analysis one can see how the social relations network function as a crucial tool for examining the entire development of a civilization. It is clear that these three states of that of development, complete compactness and dilatory degeneration and total dissolution could assist in determining the stage and age of the evolution of a civilization. On the other hand, Bennabi argues that it is of importance to examine the crucial signs and demarcations of the starting moment of the disintegration of a civilization. To explain this, he stated that from the superficial view one may see society in a well-shape and sound visage but, in essence, it is internally suffering from fatal malaise. To attain knowledge of these social weaknesses, one should examine the ego of the individual. In other words, one should test the inter-individual relations in order to determine the quality and

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nature of the egos of the individuals. In the case of their inflation, the society is heading towards its degeneration.

The reason for this, as Bennabi put it, is because any disintegration within the egos of the individuals will subsequently lead to social disintegration in fever of selfishness and individualism. As a result of this deep transformation, the person disappears and the individual replaces him in the course of decline and decadence. Bennabi described this situation stating that "likewise, social relations network becomes corrupt once inflation befalls\(^1\) the egos in such a manner that any collective concerted action becomes difficult\(^2\). It is apparent, from the foregoing, that every degeneration in the social relations network is a degeneration in the realm of persons. Thus, every corrupted relation in the realm of persons has a direct impact on both the realm of ideas and the realm of objects.\(^3\) Hence, as Bennabi aptly said:

"Any social degeneration in the realm of persons will certainly extend to the ideas and objects in the form of scarceness and shortage."\(^4\)

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Consequently, the entire movement of a civilization is corrupted and a new context will emerge to initiates the birth of the phenomenon of decline. To conclude this analysis one may emphasize the importance of the concept of the social relation as a tool of analysis which helps in following the entire picture of the development of the civilization and the psychosocial values of its members.
V- CONCEPT OF THE CYCLICAL\(^1\)

MOVEMENT OF A CIVILIZATION

In the previous discussion, an attempt was made to analyze some fundamental tools of Bennabi’s method. Namely, the concept of the three historical-cultural positions of a society which enlighten us about the expected positions and situations in which a society and its civilization may situate in a given moment of its historical and cultural evolution. The concept of the three realms, which would assist us in understanding the basic components of a human society as well as its function in the civilizing process. Furthermore, the concept of the three ages of a society which provide us with a general picture of the psychosocial development of the individual and society as well. Besides, the concept of social relations network which put us face to face with the internal and external changes and modifications occur in the movement of a civilization in the course of its evolution. On the basis of the above results, one can proceed with the next step of analysis that introduces another crucial tool of Bennabi’s method, that is; the cyclical movement of a civilization.

\(^1\)Cyclical movement of human civilization is a pattern which govern their march in history and society. "Human civilization rise and fall in a cycle manner, as historians have pointed out. Convincingly again, the Qur’ān mentions about the disappearance of so many peoples and their civilizations in the past. Modern nationalists now confirm that there is a fundamental law of nature which guides the nature’s ways to be cyclic...Dr. Jackson Davis of the University of California, in his recent book, the Seventh Year: Industrial Civilization In Transition, has shown the life-cycle of an industrial civilization. See, M. Raihan Sharif, Islamic Social Framework, (Dacca: Islamic Foundation Bangladesh: 1980), p. 255.
In a broad sense, Bennabi argues that any historical society, which has undergone a civilizational transformation, should follow a general pattern in its march. This pattern indicates that every civilization should pass three different but integral phases in its evolution. Within the context of these three phases civilization manifests itself in three different stages and states. Each one of them reflects the domination of certain values and factors; the latter will characterize the whole march of a civilization by certain kind of interrelations and features. To attain an understanding of this concept, one should question Bennabi and see how he used this concept as a tool for analyzing the movement of a civilization and its evolution in history.

A- DEFINITION OF THE CYCLICAL MOVEMENT OF A CIVILIZATION

No doubt that this concept was one of the most important contributions of Bennabi. Almost in every book which he wrote or in every idea which he discussed there was a tacit or spoken reference to this concept. Whatever the names Bennabi gave to this concept the truth of the matter is that human civilization in its march follows a defined pattern. To put it in a slightly different way "in a pre-civilized society, there comes a living idea which gives the society

1He used to call it: the cyclical phenomenon, the pattern of civilization, cycle of civilization and the phenomenon of civilization.
an initial drive or push which makes it enter history."¹ Thus, this society after being transformed will impel into the civilized stage. Bennabi argues, that the latter consist of three crucial phases; namely:

- The phase of soul,
- The phase of reason,
- The phase of instinct. To attain an understanding of the cycle of civilization, one should examine how Bennabi developed this concept and how he redefined it to fit his new system and method of analysis. After all, one should underline the fact that the influence of Ibn Khaldūn on Bennabi’s view of the cycle of civilization is very obvious. Bennabi himself in many of his works expresses this fact. A quotation from his works suggests the same. He said:

"It was Ibn Khaldūn who, inspired probably by Islamic psychological factors, disentangled the notion of cycle in his theory of the (Three generations), therein the terminology, somewhat summarized, masked the profoundness of his ideas by reducing the dimensions of a civilization to the scale of the dynasty even is narrow, this conception invites us to emphasize the transitory aspect of civilization."²

Before we proceed further, it is worth mentioning that an important version of this idea is to be found in the writings of some other scholars who studied Ibn Khaldūn. For instance, Gibb has aptly remarked that "the originality of Ibn Khaldūn’s work is to be found in his detailed and objective analysis of the political, social and economic factors underlying the establishment of political units and evolution of the state." This evolution of the State represents what Bennabi called in the above passage the cycle of civilization. This evolution of the State is described in *The Muqaddimah*, according to Ibn Khaldūn; the usual evolution of the State is manifested in terms of three generations and five stages. By his account, the development of the State is similar to that of the individual, has a natural life span, which is generally no more than three generations or about 120 years. The first generation includes those who swept over the land in conquest; once settled in the cities, they enjoy the strength and solidarity of their desert existence. The effects of sedentary living begin to appear. Ibn Khaldūn described the features and personality of this generation in the following revealing passage:

"The first generation retains the desert qualities, desert toughness, and desert savagery. Its members are used to privacy and to sharing their glory with each other; they are brave and rapacious. Therefore, the strength of group feeling continues to be preserved among them. They are sharp and

greatly feared people. People submit to them."

However, in the second generation, luxury and royal authority replaced rigorous living and solidarity. Ibn Khaldun asserted that "under the influence of royal authority and life of ease, the second-generation changes from the desert attitude to sedentary culture, from privation to luxury and plenty". In line with this, some attempts are made by the second generation at recapturing the previous state, but by the third generation the qualities of desert life have been forgotten.

"By this point, sedentary living has taken its toll; the empire has became (senile and is worn out,) and the fourth generation faces destruction". Moreover, Ibn Khaldun introduced the same concept of the cycle in a slightly different context. He debates that the evolution of the State passes through five stages; the first stage, is that of success. The nomads overthrow their enemies and establish a new State. The second stage, is the one in which the ruler gains complete control over his people. The ruler secures the total control over his territories and thus insures the unity and consolidation. In the third stage the State achieves a stable level of progress and tranquillity. In the fourth stage, the State reaches the peak of its social, institutional and cultural organization. However, this stage starts witnessing

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certain kind of inertia and inclining towards preserving what is already achieved without any new attempts of invention or expansion. In the fifth stage the society faces the state of disintegration and corruption in its structure and function.\(^1\) Taking into consideration the above discussion, it is clear thus far that Bennabi benefited from Ibn Khaldūn’s view in developing his notion of the cycle. An observer has mentioned that “there is a clear resemblance between his view on the social development and those of Ibn Khaldūn. However, Bennabi, was not only a careful student of Ibn Khaldūn, but also an intelligent beneficiary of more recent advancement in the modern social sciences.”\(^2\) Therefore, he was capable of fathoming the general pattern, which govern the march of civilization, as we shall see. In fact, both of them had emphasized the transitory aspect of the values of State or civilization as well as the importance of the changes occurring in the human personality and social culture during the process of evolution. The latter, suggests that the human civilization should start from a given point and follow a determined pattern, which finally leads to its end.


B- CYCLE OF CIVILIZATION AS A TOOL OF ANALYSIS

To introduce this idea, Bennabi asserted that history has a cyclic movement and sequence; it is sometimes recording the glittering aspects for the nation and in other instances, it records the worse states of degeneration and decline. This simple social remark is very important in addressing the social problems. It assists in determining the real position of the society in the cycle of civilization. Thus, when we know our position, we can find out the causes of the decline and also the existing capacities of progress. Bennabi described his view of the cycle of civilization in the following passage:

"Civilization presents itself as a numerical series following its course in similar but not-identical terms. Thus appears an essential notion of history: the cycle of civilization. Each cycle is defined by certain psychotemporal conditions proper to a social group: it is a civilization in these conditions. Then the civilization migrates, shifts its abode, and transfers its values in another area. It thus perpetuates itself in an indefinite exodus through successive metamorphoses: each metamorphosis being a particular synthesis of man, soil and time."

1Al-Khatib, Philosophy of Civilization, Op. cit., p. 93.
It is clear in the body of the above passage that the concept of psycho-temporal conditions of each civilization as well as its migration, transfer and shift from one place to another implies the existence of the notion of the cycle. In fact, in these conditions lie the living identity and characteristics of each civilization which distinct it from other civilizations. Accordingly, if civilizations are differing in their identities and characters, one must underline their diversity and integrality.

Thus, one can consider this diversity as one of the ways through which the notion of the cycle appears. That is to say, if human civilizations are not identical and selfsame, then one should admit the fact that there is no civilization, which can last forever on the one hand, and there is no civilization that could dominate over all civilizations on the other hand. Therefore, the notion of the cycle would be the solution. In this respect, every civilization plays its role in history and once it reaches the state of decline, it stops from developing and another civilization should start anew to formulate its cycle in history. It is this transitory aspect of the civilizations, which justifies in history the cyclical movement of a civilization.¹ The question now is: how does this transitory process occur in the social context? Responding to this question, Bennabi debates that every human civilization passes through three important phases in its evolution. The spiritual phase, the rational phase and the instinctive phase. Once the civilization reaches the third phase, the transitory process commences shifting the values and seeds of civilization to

another area. Thus, a new synthesis of man, soil and time emerges in history to initiate the event of birth of a new civilization with different characteristics and distinct psychosocial context. To put it in a slightly different way, Bennabi asserted that the development of such a civilization is represented in three phases cycle according to the following diagram.
The zero point in the cycle represents the point of separation between two different positions, the pre-civilized position and the civilized position. A religious idea or a moral principle emerges at this juncture. A driving spiritual force pushes the society towards the civilized phase and drives it to construct the historical context that will synthesize the three factors: Man, soil and time. It is this "synthesis that coincides with the birth of a civilization as it concurs, with the starting of its historical action."\(^2\) That is to say, at the beginning of every civilization a religious idea or a moral principle\(^3\) breathes the spiritual seeds that would generate a movement of civilization. Hence, the spiritual phase commences and dominates over the life of the individual and the society as well. Therefore, all activities and actions of the individual are under the total orientation of soul and its driving force. Any modification or change in life of the society is indebted to the spiritual forces that emerged with the religious idea in its broad sense. However, this spiritual phase cannot last eternally; rather it starts decreasing on parallel with the evolution of the society and the rise of the material problems as well as the expansion of civilization. Thus, once a society reaches certain limits the spiritual forces start losing their total control over the activities of reason and instinct.

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Therefore, in order for a civilization to cope with this change, it shifts to the second phase; that is, the rational phase. Bennabi argues that in this phase, most of the activities fall under the control of the reason. Thus, the civilization keeps its evolution in the course of history, but the rational phase does not last forever. Therefore, when the rational forces start losing their control over the activities of the individual, the civilization faces a new context in which the instinctive forces begin dominating over the spiritual and rational one.

In order for a civilization to respond to the status quo, it inflects and turns to the third phase; that is the instinctive phase.¹ In the context of this phase, most of the activities of the individual and the society are under the control of the instincts. Accordingly, the civilization impels into the post-civilized stage and thus its values transit to another place where a new synthesis of man, soil and time would commence. Bennabi described these phases in this revealing passage:

"The three phases of this cycle² are representative of three stages which a civilization undergoes in the process of its evolution. The complete stage in which all the human qualities and talents are subject to the control of the spirit (faith or soul), thus being guided by the considerations which are of metaphysical nature. The second stage where all qualities and talents of the individual are particularly under the

¹Ibid., p. 97.
control of reason, thus being oriented toward tackling the practical problems of life. The third and last stage represents the complete disintegration of those qualities and talents when they become, under the dominance of the instinct, freed from the tutorship of both spirit and reason. At this stage, no common activity is by any means possible, for it is chaos and anarchy that actually prevail."

According to Bennabi, this is the pattern of the march of every civilization in its evolution. He maintained that human civilizations are but series of interrelated cycles similar in their phases to that of the Islamic and Christian civilization. The first phase commences when a religious idea emerges and it ends once the instinctive forces dominate over the spiritual and rational forces. That is to say, almost all-historical societies are subjected to this pattern. He ascertained, that "the historical experience assures these phases of the evolution of civilizations and almost no civilization is an exception of this pattern." Elaborating further in the above idea, Bennabi debates that "a cycle born in certain psycho-temporal conditions develops therefrom, and when the human civilization has outstripped them, it is the end of a cycle. Another commences in new conditions that would, in their turn, by passed. It is this law that traces across the millennium of history, this path mounting in gentle ascent that humanity slowly scales."

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the above passage, one can see the general pattern of the transitory process of the values and seeds of civilization from one context to another. However, this general picture of the three phases; spiritual, rational and instinctive do not tell us much about the changes and modifications that can be imposed upon the individual and society as well. In other words, until now we could not find an analysis of the function of the religious idea in the civilizing process. In the line with this, Bennabi suggested another important dimension of the cycle, that is the psychosocial aspect. Further illustrations on this point are to be introduced in the context of the next element.

C- THE PSYCHOSOCIAL DIMENSION OF THE CYCLE OF CIVILIZATION

In a broad sense, Bennabi argues that the three phases of the cycle are not a mere evolution and shift from one situation to another or from one phase to another. Rather, they reflect deep and essential modifications in the human personality as well as in the social relations of the society. Before we proceed further it is worth mentioning that, Ibn Khaldun provided us with important ideas in this point. He stated:

"It should be known that a dynasty (State) goes through different stages and encounters new conditions. Through the conditions that are peculiar to a particular stage, the
supporters of the dynasty acquire in that stage traits of character which do not exist in any other stage. Traits of character are natural results of the peculiar situation in which they are found."

In this pivotal passage, we can note the significance of the changes, which occurred, and the attributes that are acquired by the people in every phase of their development. According to Bennabi, the majority of these changes are the result of the function of the religious idea in history. To attain an understanding of the function of religion in the psychosocial context, we should examine the change that occurs in the psychology of man and in the social context of the society when a religious idea starts its function in history. On the one hand, one can remark the modifications and developments of the social relations network of a society as well as the social level of the system of its conditioned reflexes at any phase of the evolution of a civilization. According to Bennabi, the religious idea formulates two important instruments of the civilizing process; firstly the social relations network which represents the new realm of persons. Secondly, the quality and nature of the psychological reflections toward the new principles and teachings of religion. The latter, is called the system of the conditioned reflexes. In other words, before the construction of the social relations in the society, it should be first formulated within the human soul. Therefore, when we discuss the concept of social relations we should relate it to the system of conditioned reflexes.²

Bennabi debates that in light of the above, one can identify the relationship between these two concepts and each of the three phases introduced in the diagram. By his account, the spiritual phase can be explained in two different, but integral ways. Viewing it from the sociological angle, it pictures the state where the social relations network is perfect and enjoys an optimum level of density and compactness. This state of density and effectiveness is obviously described by the two terms “firm” and “compact” building mentioned in the following Qur'anic verse:

{Verily, God loves (only) those who fight in his cause in (solid) ranks, as though they were a building, firm and compact}(61:4).

This is the real state of the social relations at the spiritual stage where every activity of the individual or society is under the control of faith and soul. On the other hand, one can explain the spiritual phase in psychological terms by saying that it corresponds to the state in which the individual is in his best conditions. That is to say, “the conditioned reflexes system of the individual reaches its utmost efficacy with his vital energy being in its optimum level of organization and orientation.”

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Indeed, it is religion that subjugates the vital energy of man to the conditioning process. An observer has explained Bennabi’s view by saying:

“When human beings are in their natural stage fitrah, Bennabi theorizes, they are guided mainly by their natural instinct. Yet, when a spiritual idea or religion appears, it subjugates and suppresses their instinct to a conditional process. This does not mean that the instinct will be terminated but rather that they will be disciplined into a relationship functional to the religion. Individuals in this situation are partially freed from the natural state while their spiritual potency controls their lives.”

In other words, the individual and society in this phase enjoys a dynamic civilizing movement, which condemns any spirit of slackness and apathy. Bennabi explained the idea in a slightly different way when he discussed the nature of the individual at point zero of the diagram of the march of civilization. He debates that it represents the state to which some Muslim scholars attribute the word “Fitrah”, i.e. he is fully equipped with all his inborn instinct thus being in the state of the man of nature. The role of the religious idea will be manifested in submitting those instincts to a process of conditioning and adaptation, which represents what, is known in Freudian psychology as (repression). Bennabi said:

“Yet, it is not of the nature of this process to eradicate those instincts but it rather regularizes them in an integral functional

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relationship with the imperatives of the religious ideal. Thus, the vital energy represented by the instincts is not abolished. Rather, it is subjugated to the rules of a specific order. At this phase, the individual is partly liberated from the natural laws which govern his biological structure such that being is almost totally under the control of the spiritual considerations and forces generated within his (inner) by the religious ideal so that he leads a new life based on the laws of the soul.\[1\]

However, with the shift of civilization to the rational phase\[2\], the society enjoys a mature and developed relations network which attains its full expansion but, nevertheless, suffers from some defects which commence appearing on the surface of its structure and organization. In other words, the social relations network starts suffering from certain hidden maladies. Accordingly, the society continues its development but bearing these internal diseases in its body.

In psychological terms, this means that the individual no longer exerts full control over his vital energy in the course of undertaking his social function. Thus, a part of his activities and civilizing capacities are no more subject to his conditioned reflexes mechanism. That is to say, faith starts losing its full control over the instincts and energies of the individual.\[3\]

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\[3\] Bennabi, Mi\l\d, Op. cit., pp. 101-102
In spite of all these changes, the society like the individual still follows its course of evolution and development. This is due in its major part to the force of faith breathed in the society in the spiritual phase. In this regard, Bennabi argues that the progress in this phase owes its continuity to the driving force of the thrust of faith generated in the previous phase.\(^1\) However, in this phase one should underline the fact that not all the civilizing forces of the individual and society are functioning properly. Rather, part of the society’s forces and energies have fallen into a state of apathy whereas another one has gone into the abyss and decline. In other words, the individual continues losing catch\(^2\) with his ideal on the one hand and deviating from his original path on the other hand. Bennabi asserted that as a result of the society’s expansion and as its web of relations approaches perfection, new material problems and new exigencies arise.

In order for a civilization to cope with the arising new problems and exigencies as well as with the emergence of new standards, it follows a new turning that coincides with the renaissance) in the case of the European cycle, and with the advent of the \('\text{Umaiyyah\} \) dynasty and breakdown of the righteous Caliphate in the case of the Islamic cycle. In both cycles, the new turning was that of reason, because in contrast to the order of the (soul), the order of reason does not exert total control over the natural instincts, the latter therefore is gradually

\(^1\text{Ibid., p. 71.}\)

\(^2\text{Al-Khatib, \textit{Philosophy of Civilization}, Op. cit., p. 96.}\)
emancipated inasmuch as the power of the (soul) weakens as was the situation during the Umaiyyah period when the society ceased to exert its pressure over the individual.¹

Bennabi debates that it is only natural then that the instincts reach full emancipation as a culmination of the gradual weakening of the powers of the soul. As history carries on its movement, the process of evolution of civilization manifests its impacts on the psychology of the individual as well as on the moral edifice² of the society that ceases, at a given stage, adjusting the behavior of the individual. The more the instinctive energies become emancipated, the less the individual's action becomes subjected to the moral considerations. Additionally, Bennabi further argues that:

"If one was able to measure, by means of an accurate device, these psychological conditions so as to discern their implications as one would do in the laboratories of natural sciences, then it would have been possible to notice the creeping decadence affecting the moral standards of the society. In clearer terms, one would have witnessed that, as soon as the society enters the phase of reason, the social efficacy of the religious idea starts decreasing at a mounting rate."³

In the third phase, the natural instinct of the individual is no longer under the control of the religious idea and society as well. Bennabi explained this state in this revealing passage:

“They are no more integrated in a harmonious whole. Instead, they work individually in pursuit of selfish interests as the conditioning order of the vital energy loses its social function and is no more subject to conditioned reflexes mechanism which is entitled to promote the process of adaptation and orientation of that energy.”

Consequently, it is individualism that prevails as a result of the instincts’ emancipation and then the social relations network is totally dissolved. According to him, this is the age of decline and decadence, which reflects disintegration of the relations network and the conditioned reflexes system of its archetype. Accordingly, he described the psychological and sociological evolution of civilization in the third phase by saying:

“Hence, the instinct still reined in by the religious ideal carry on their emancipation struggle and gradually gains back their dominance over both the individual and society. Once the instincts are completely emancipated, man’s destiny becomes at their mercy and, consequently, a new phase of

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3 Ibid., pp. 70-71, 72.
civilization, i.e. the third phase, begins. The religious ideal then ceases to fulfill its social function and society finally plunges into the state of decline and disintegration thus denoting the end of a cycle of civilization. This complete cycle sheds enough light upon the phases, which the vital energy undergoes especially the first phase where this vital energy is totally submitted to the order of the religious ideal. It also demonstrates the conditions under which the process of organization and orientation of that energy is carried out under the guidance of the religious ideal.”

According to Bennabi, once a society reaches its third phase; that of decadence and degeneration, it starts the sequence of the end of its cycle and then the values of civilization move toward another space, where another cycle commences on a new bio-historical synthesis.

Eventually, we should note that in the abandoned space every thing becomes vacant, for example the work of sciences loses all its significance. Bennabi debates that wherever, “there ceases the radiation of the soul, the rational work also comes to stop. One would say that the thirst to understand and the will to act, the moment he loses the elan, the tension of faith. Reason disappears because its work perish in a milieu that could no longer understand or utilize

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them.”¹ This is the era of degeneration and corruption. In this respect, the statement of Bariun maybe be misunderstood. It may indicate that this corruption is inevitable because of the instinctual release. She maintained the view that “according to Bennabi, reason will have lost its social function as human beings lose the tension of the faith. Society will then enter the darkness of history, as the cycle of civilization ends.”² I deem it of significance to remove an ambiguity that may lead to the misunderstanding of Bennabi’s view in this regard.

Bariun argues that this situation of corruption is inevitable, thus, this judgment may put Bennabi in the circle of the determinist scholars. On the contrary, as we have analyzed Bennabi believed in the cyclical movement of a civilization, however, he was very aware of the fact that human will is a dynamic factor in the march of civilization. A few revealing passages may serve as evidence for his opinion. He argues that the historical determinism is not existing. In other words, the historical determinism³ becomes under the command and control of man himself.⁴ Furthermore, he argues that so long as man is in the state of accepting willingly the instructions and directions of the soul and reason that leads

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VI- OBSERVATIONS\textsuperscript{1} ON BENNABI'S TOOLS OF ANALYSIS

As we discussed earlier that the analytical tools are the most important part of the method. Accordingly, it seems that Bennabi's tools of analysis are consistent and creative in grasping the essence of the civilizational problems of the Muslim society. The five tools of analysis of his method reflected his systematic study of the march of Islamic civilization. Accordingly, one may pose certain questions to challenge the significance and function of his tools. In his first tool of analysis, Bennabi claimed that human society should situate itself in one of the positions or stages of development, which were discussed earlier. In this respect, three positions were identified, the pre-civilization, the civilization and the post civilization position. On the basis of these three positions we can determine the characteristics, capacities and ways of developing the society and its civilization in a given moment of history. Taking this point into consideration may lead us to certain sorts of generalization, which may hide and undermine the rich and diverse structure and function of the society in one position of its development. For instance, when the society is situated in the pre-civilized position or state, it has certain characteristics, which describe its entire structure and function.

\textsuperscript{1}It is relevant to note that the researcher could not come across clear and systematic criticism or evaluation of Bennabi's tools of analysis. Therefore, an attempted is made to provide certain comments and observations.
to a civilization and its development, these psychological factors and capacities are saved in his consciousness.¹

It is obvious from the above analysis that man could direct his steps towards integration or disintegration. There is no determinism in the historical movement formulated by man himself. To express this point in a slightly different way, one may say that man is responsible for his progress or decline in any stage of his development. However, we may underline the fact that human beings in certain moments of the social evolution could not control the situations which surround them. Consequently, they could not achieve their goals. This second state of human shortcomings and failure is alike the spirit and tendency of the historical determinism which puts pre-determined obstacles on the way of man and his development. To sum up, the concept of the cycle of civilization is one of the crucial tools of analysis in Bennabi’s method. It can assist the researchers in following the different internal and external changes and modifications occurring in the entire evolution of a civilization. Being acquainted with the three phases and their psychosocial impact, one may be able to analyze the phenomenon of civilization. Accordingly, knowing the phase of evolution and its characteristics will enable us to treat any kind of problem encountered at any moment. This is due to the fact that we have a general picture of the pattern of evolution and its different contexts and phases.

Accordingly, if this is the general feature of the society in this state, one should be more observant and try to analyze the different sources of the capacity of the society. In other words, any generalization about any state of the development of the society may undermine its richness and diversity within that social context. Therefore, one cannot say that the pre-civilized state characterizes the society by immobility and statistical spirit.

In fact, one may find living capacities and rich sources of development in the pre-civilized society, but because of the general features of stagnation which characterize it at that moment, one may undermine the role of these capacities. Meanwhile, the society in the civilized position is characterized by its dynamic movement and living spirit of progress. This type of generalization may also lead to certain sorts of undermining the force of inertia and backwardness in this position of the evolution of the society and its civilization. For instance, in the civilized position, we could find various forces of degeneration within the civilized social context. Therefore, in the study of the concept of the three positions of the society, one should view things in a balanced way in order to grasp the essence of the human association. This association comprises in every stage of its development two important forces of movement, the dynamic and the stagnant forces. In every position one should examine the relation and interaction between the forces of progress and forces of backwardness in order to understand the whole picture of the society in any given moment of its development. Additionally,
one should note that a society in one position of its development could have certain characteristics of the three positions or states. It may have the character of the pre-civilized, the civilized and the post-civilized society. However, it is difficult to openly observe the dialectic and interference of these characteristics in the course of the social development. What the researcher can observe is the domination of one of the characteristics of a given position over the others, but this domination in fact hides the entire process of interaction and dialectic of the three positions or states of evolution that would influence the movement of society. Therefore, it is appreciable to study the relatedness of these positions and deal with them as a set of integral elements that reflect their interference in the course of the social movement. Separating one from another will lead to a fragmented understanding of the development of the individual and society. In his second tool of analysis, Bennabi provided through the concept of the three realms a highly abstract structure of the society. According to him, developed human association requires the existence of three realms, that of ideas, that of persons and that of objects. The relations within each of these realms and the relations among them reflect the importance of each one of them in the development of the society and civilization. Therefore, the historical action or civilization cannot be constructed unless a systematic interaction of these elements is carried out by the society. Accordingly, the realm of ideas and that of persons become increasingly important, particularly in the cases where society commences its historical action.
What really interests us in this respect, is the function of these three realms as a driving force that formulates the concrete action that transforms society. Fragmenting the study of those realms would not help us to understand their dynamic role in the civilizing process. Therefore, one should look at these realms as a set of interrelated concepts that provide an explanation of the movement of human society. Hence, one should analyze the influence of ideas on the realm of persons and objects, the influence of persons on the realm of ideas and objects and the influence of objects on the realm of persons and ideas. In fact, what Bennabi emphasized more in his attempt is the importance of the realm of ideas and persons in the civilizing process. However, one would notice that this influence changes from one time to another, from one reality to another and from one stage of development to another. Therefore, sometimes the influence of persons dominates over the remaining realms, while in other circumstances one may find objects more effective and influential than the other two realms. It is not a fixed rule to say that ideas or persons dominate in all stages of the development of a civilization. Rather, it is a matter of dialectic and interaction within the social context. In certain periods, the social milieu and the human consciousness may give precedence to one of these realms. This precedence can explain the nature and characteristics of reality and stage of evolution of a civilization. However, one should in all cases relate the realms to each other in order to understand their function and influence on the development of society and its civilization.
Additionally, Bennabi's analysis of the realm of ideas did not clearly explain the mechanism through which this realm functions and influences the other two realms. For instance, in his analysis of the essential ingredients of the realm of ideas, he focussed on the impressed and expressed ideas without mentioning how these two types of ideas are formulated in the course of the civilizing process. In other words, one cannot find an explanation that interprets the way that the sacred or secular source constructs these ideas. That is to say, Bennabi focused more on the function of the two types of ideas, rather than their structure and formulation. In fact, what interests the present Muslim civilization is the methods and techniques of formulating the impressed and expressed ideas or the new Islamic world view for knowledge and civilization construction. In other words, an observer has aptly mentioned in the following passage:

"Considering predicament of Muslims today, we infer it is the result of their world view which is rather formed haphazardly and not achieved through what we termed a 'scientific world view formation'; consequently, the dynamism required as a conceptual foundation for the re-emergence of Islamic civilization is lacking. We cannot, therefore, regard Islamic civilization as a vital civilization today. We thus propose that the most urgent task of contemporary Muslims is to express their need for Islamic

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1 This is what Bennabi means by the realm of ideas with its three components discussed earlier.
Because when we think of the function and role of a context which does not exist yet, the world view becomes the prior for any endeavor to construct ideas and produce knowledge. Certainly, Bennabi’s analysis of the realm of ideas was based on an existing historical world view of Islamic thought and culture. However, that world view could only explain the function and structure of the impressed and expressed ideas in that living context. Therefore, the present Islamic society should think of formulating its de facto ideas that can respond to the demands of the status quo. Hence, the first question that suggests itself in this respect is: How could one deal with the sacred sources in order to formulate the living impressed and expressed ideas that can respond to the demands of the present reality and situation of Islamic civilization? This question leads to the point of interest in this analysis; it shows that Islamic civilization is not in the stage of describing an existing realm of ideas. Rather it is facing a problem of formulating a contemporary original and effective realm of ideas. Therefore, one should shift the focus of the study from a mere description and analysis of a historical realm of ideas and its achievements to the new methods and tools of constructing an original but contemporary realm of ideas.

Thus, the challenging questions would be: To what extent is the Muslim society able to formulate an original but contemporary realm of ideas? Which methods are suitable for dealing with the sacred sources of ideas in order to formulate this realm? What are the real questions that should be answered by the new realm of ideas?

In all these cases, one faces the challenge of developing new methods for dealing with the revealed text, the contemporary human sciences and knowledge, and the real questions of the Islamic society. Indeed, the energies should be galvanized to reform the methodologies of Islamic thought and rebuild the Islamic cultural system... and restore the Qur'an to the Islamic cultural scene. Indeed, these are the new points of focus of the realm of ideas. Therefore, any analysis of the structure and function of the realm of ideas cannot be relevant unless it provides answers to the above mentioned questions. To accomplish what Bennabi has started concerning the issue of the realm of ideas; one should answer these questions in the form of a new system of ideas that could be original and practical. Accordingly, this new realm of ideas will decide on the quality and characteristics of the new realm of persons who could carry out the message of the Islamic civilization in the present era of its development.

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Additionally, this realm of ideas also will determine our new relations with the contemporary sophisticated realm of objects, which surrounds us everywhere. Therefore, the first task of the contemporary Islamic society is to formulate a new realm of ideas that can solve the problems of the realm of persons and objects. However, in the process of formulating this realm, one should benefit from the contributions of the present realm of persons and objects. In other words, it is a matter of combination that could introduce a new synthesis of the three realms in a mature attempt to transform the Islamic society and direct it towards a new civilizing process. On the other hand, it should be noted that Bennabi’s understanding of the concept of the three psychosocial ages of the individual and society rises certain important questions. According to his analysis humanity passes through these three ages forward and downward. However, this psychosocial process may create ambiguity in studying the development of mankind from the very beginning stage of its development. Taking into consideration the concept of three ages put us face to face with the contributions of the previous civilizations to the human development.

Bennabi considered that mankind in its childhood formulates its judgments in accordance with the criteria related to the age of objects, in its second age its judgements are dominated by the standards of the realm of persons and in its age of maturity it depends more on the realm of ideas. Hence, the question which suggests itself here is related to the great contributions of civilizations which are
considered living in the age of objects or persons. Is it possible for a society that lives in the age of objects to produce a civilization? Recalling the history of humanity would help us to analyze the contributions of the previous civilizations to the development of humanity.

In spite of the phase of their existence and their stage or age of development, one can see the extent to which their contributions were important to the development of humanity. The Egyptian, Indian, Chinese and Greek civilizations had left their traces in the development of the global human civilization. On the other hand, one should not forget the great contributions of the Prophets and Messengers to the development of the intellectual, spiritual and social life of humanity. It is of importance to note that the Prophets “seek opportunities of redirecting or refashioning the forces of collective life...they insert themselves in the sweep of time with a view to control the forces of history, and thereby to create a fresh world of ideal...In its creative act the Prophet’s will judges both itself and the world of concrete fact in which it endeavours to objectify itself. In penetrating the impervious material before him the Prophet discovers himself for himself, and unveils himself to the eye of history.”

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That is to say, appointing one of the stages of evolution of human civilization as the age of objects and another one as the age of persons, may undermine the pivotal role of the prophets in developing the human capacities to the level of maturity. In other words, one should analyze the psychosocial development of mankind with reference to the role and function of the Prophets in developing human life. "Whenever an Apostle of Allah comes to this world he presents a practical code of life like the theoretical concepts and beliefs as a result of which a new social, economic, political and legal system, in short a civilization comes into being." Indeed, there was a gradual process of maturation of humanity, but one should not forget the qualitative contributions of the Messengers whose influence reflected at what extent was man able to respond to the call of revelation and divine guidance. More than this, one may consider the models of the Prophets and Messengers as movements for the maturation of humanity as well as for the guidance of the human civilization. Therefore, it is difficult to describe their periods and particularly their deeds and methods of guidance as a part of the age of objects or persons. Certainly, the people who witnessed the presence of those Prophets had many characteristics of those ages, but what is worth noting is the qualitative methods of the Prophets which contributed to the process of elevating the awareness of people at the level of maturity.

Indeed, "...The Prophets of Allah (S.A.W.), in order to instill religious beliefs in the minds of people, adopted such a style of preaching which besides being simple and wise akin to the human nature and temperament...They adopted new methods to acquaint the people, with the massage." Thus, one should not generalize the theory of the three ages to the extent that will undermine those qualitative contributions that could help us in constructing what maybe called "the sociology of Prophet hood" as an outcome of their civilizational struggle. On the contrary, we should underline the specific factors that influence the individual and social life of the people in every age of their development taking into consideration the other factors and sources of maturity and awareness in the same age. For instance, in the age of objects one should analyze the role and impact of the existing persons and ideas on the entire movement and life of the society. Separating the ages from each other within one social context as well as generalizing the features of one age upon the others will not reflect the clear picture of the evolution of the society in this age or in another one. Hence, the concept of the three psychosocial ages of the society should be revised within the Islamic context, which includes the qualitative contributions of the Prophets during the course of the civilizational development of humanity. This Islamic context would help us to comprehend the development of humanity from one age to another but with reference to the systematic patterns and norms which govern the movement of human civilization.

In fact, the Qur'ānic view of the human development reflects the real and deep transformations which made the development of the human civilization from one age to another significant and crucial in understanding the different stages of its evolution taking into account the examples of the Prophets in general and that of Muhammad (S.A.W.) in particular. Indeed, "as Islam did not claim to be the first true religion but a reminder of the great spiritual truths taught to every civilized group of humanity, so the morals that it preached had been taught and practiced by virtuous people since time immemorial....the primary purpose of all true religion is the moral transformation of man."\(^1\) In fact, any evaluation of the development of the human civilization should refer to the prophetic models of change and civilization.

An observer has mentioned that "God the creator, who made the world and manifested himself in the natural order, also had a blueprint for the human community which Muhammad, like the previous Prophets, was entrusted to communicate to mankind. Belief in the truth of the Prophet's revelations was antecedent to the result it engendered in the world....If the plan was divine, its execution was part of human history."\(^2\)

\(^{1}\) Abdul Hakim Khalifa, *The Prophet and His Message*, First Ed. (Lahore: Institute of Islamic Culture, 1980), pp. 140-266.

In his fourth tool of analysis, Bennabi discussed the issue of the social relations network and its function as a tool of analysis of the development of a given civilization. It is so clear that there is a relation between the realm of persons and the network of relations on the one hand, and a relation between the realm of ideas and this social relations network on the other hand.

Indeed, what Bennabi emphasized is the last kind of relation. By his account, the ideas cannot function effectively and influence the life of people unless a compacted social relations network supports them. The latter allows the realm of ideas to contribute to the development or to the decline of the civilization. If the network of relations is dynamic and effective, the realm of ideas could develop and play a crucial role in the evolution of the society and its civilization. On the contrary, if the network of relations is disintegrated the realm of ideas could be destructive in the development of a civilization. Therefore, one should note that in certain periods of the development of a given civilization both, the realm of ideas and the social relations network couldn’t assist the society to develop in a correct and right direction. For instance, the present western society has an effective social relations network, which contain all kinds of sophisticated instruments and institutions as well as a very dynamic realm of ideas, which comprise all types of methods and techniques. However, this society is not developing in a balanced and consistent way. Many of its social, intellectual, educational, cultural and economic policies reflect some sorts of moral chaos.
Additionally, one may thereby expose and observe its tendency of domination and centralization, which represents the essence of its realm of ideas and its social relations network. What is important to mention is not that the realm of ideas and the network of relations are not themselves the agents and sources, which generate change in the society and develop the civilization. Rather, it is the question of the quality of the realm of ideas and the quality of the social relations network that decides the original and correct tendency and march of the civilization in history.

Therefore, one should ask about the nature and quality of the realm of ideas and the relations network which could introduce a pivotal and beneficial movement of development. In fact, sometimes society enjoys an effective realm of ideas and a dense social relations network, but it may decline and degenerate in terms of its morality. In this case, Bennabi’s analysis did not provide many explanations about the reasons of this decline. Therefore, one should include a third element, which can shed some lights on this phenomenon. As a matter of fact, if any given society enjoys a realm of ideas which is supported by a compact social relations network, but it moves towards decline this is an indicator that the quality of the realm of ideas and the quality of the social relations causes problems to the correct and balanced relations between them, the fact which may lead to the disequilibrium. Therefore, a third factor should be added to the elements of analysis. Indeed, the accurate patterns and norms which govern the structure and
function of the realm of ideas as well as the patterns which regulate the structure and function of the social relations network should be taken into consideration. If the realm of ideas and the relations network are in agreement with those patterns and norms, then their quality and nature will reflect their originality and consistency. This is why Islam emphasizes the importance of the patterns of God in the horizon and human life. A Muslim thinker has aptly noted that "for there is a great but neglected source of the knowledge of Allah (S.W.T) in the form of nature observed as the tangible and open 'Book of Allah' (ayat kawniyyah as complementary to ayāt qur'āniyya)". However, if the ideas and the relations are in contradiction with these norms, then the civilization cannot continue its march even when it contains a realm of ideas and a social relations network. In other words, in certain periods of the evolution of the civilization the compact social relations network become the fatal factor, which paves the way for the degeneration of the civilization. This is not because the social relations network is not compact or effective but because it contradicts in its march the norms and patterns of Allah in the Universe and human society.

The matter of the truth is that this third element is the driving force behind the success or failure of the realm of ideas and the social relations network as well. Hence, one should analyze the phenomenon of the decline of civilization with reference to the quality of relations between ideas and social network on the one

\[1\text{Kamal Hassan, Towards, Op. cit., p. 43.}\]
hand and the laws and patterns of the social movement on the other hand. This is because those patterns can be taken as criteria for the consistency or inconsistency within the realm of ideas and the social relations network. Thus, in order to improve the capacities of the social relations network as a tool of analysis, one should relate it to the concept of the patterns and laws which govern the individual and social movement. In this regard, one should note that Bennabi was able to introduce another important tool that deals with the patterns of the movement of a civilization in the course of its march and evolution. He demonstrated to our view his concept of the cyclical movement of a civilization as a manifestation of one of the pattern of human civilization.

According to Bennabi, civilization follows in its march a determined but an open pattern. It commences, develops and then declines following a defined scheme of evolution which is of an open nature because “although we do not think that this is a necessary development of a civilization, this seems to have been the course of all civilizations; namely, rising, progressing and reaching at its height, then declining and finally falling”\(^1\) However, this defined process is open for new human experiences whenever there is a new synthesis of man, soil and time. It is an open process because it transfers the values of civilization from one context to another and from one culture to another. This transforming process reflects the essence of civilization as a driving force behind the modifications and changes

occurring in the individual and social context of the people in a given period of the
civilizational development.

To grasp the essence of the cycle of civilization, one should refer to it as a
tool of analysis and not a mere diagram to be followed by civilizations in history.
As a matter of fact, some researchers who are concerned with Bennabi’s thought
did not analyze the concept of the cycle as a methodological tool. Therefore, they
were unable to fathom the correct and effective role of this tool in Bennabi’s
method. For instance, Al-Qurayshi’s criticism of Bennabi’s view of the cycle was
not based on an objective analysis of the concept. He was unable to differentiate
between the two levels of the concept, the level of utilizing it as a tool of analysis
and the level of using it as a diagram to follow the evolution and transition of the
values of civilization from one context to another. This misunderstanding led al-
Qurayshi to the following conclusion:

“Bennabi’s view of the cycle of civilization
was changed\(^1\) even in its theoretical level.
Particularly, in his last view concerning the
western civilization. He mentioned that
civilization is no longer subjected to the
pattern of the cycle.”\(^2\)

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\(^1\)It is worth mentioning that al-Qurayshi’s view on this point is based only on *The Afro-
Asiatism* which makes his attempt subjective for two reasons. Firstly, this book was written in
1956 while many other books which came later reflected Bennabi’s concern and usage of this
concept, such as *Milad* (1962), *The Problems of ideas in the Muslim world* (1971) and *Muslim
in the realm of economics*(1972). Secondly, he does not differentiate between the two levels of
analysis of the cycle.

Analyzing this conclusion within the general framework of Bennabi’s method showed some sorts of exaggeration. In fact, Bennabi through his new view of the cycle reflected a mature understanding of the evolution of the human civilization. According to him, our understanding of the cyclical pattern should cope with the changes of the human reality and the achievements of human civilization.

In this respect, he noted that the technological and industrial accomplishments of Western civilization led to two important events of global concern; firstly, the geographical unity of the human civilizations which reflects the role of the technological breakthrough. The latter, made humanity a single body which lives in a very close communication. Secondly, this breakthrough also made the present human civilization in a position of sharing a common destination with regard to their responsibilities in front of the important issues which face humanity, such as environment, population, famine, education, war, peace etc. Hence, this new circumstance implies the concept of the civilizational co-existence.

These changes in the human context and civilizational reality led Bennabi to his new view of the cycle that reflected his mature evaluation and deep analysis of the development of human civilization. This understanding did invite us to undermine the importance and role of the concept of cycle as tool of analysis,
which helps in studying the psychosocial development of the individual and society in the course of their development. In fact, even in the most developed and united types of human association one should analyze the individual and social changes occurring in the human context. Therefore, the concept of the cycle can serve as a tool of analysis even in the context of a universal human civilization where every nation or culture contributes to the development of humanity.