

The Problem of Underdevelopment and the Conditions for Development in the Thought of Malik Bennabi: An Analytical Reading of His Civilizational Project

Dr: Mohamed Mellah ¹

University Mouloud Mammeri of Tizi Ouzou–Algeria-

Email: mellahmohamed584@gmail.com

Dr: Hocine Bechim ²

University M'hamed Bougara of Boumerdes-Algeria-

Email: h.bechim@univ-boumerdes.dz

Orcid ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3669-8661>

Dr: Abdelkrim Khelifi ³

University M'hamed Bougara of Boumerdes-Algeria-

Email: a.khelifi@univ-boumerdes.dz

Received: 01/04/2026

Accepted: 23/07/2026

Published: 25/09/2026

Abstract:

The issue of underdevelopment and the problem of development are among the most prominent subjects that have attracted the attention of thinkers in the Islamic world. This study examines the problem of underdevelopment and the conditions for achieving civilization in the thought of Malik Bennabi. It seeks to explain the causes and manifestations of underdevelopment and to propose the foundations for renaissance and development. Bennabi viewed underdevelopment as a comprehensive civilizational crisis associated with several internal and external factors. He also developed an integrated vision of the process of civilizational construction as a means of overcoming the state of underdevelopment. This study aims to analyze the problem of underdevelopment and the conditions for development in Malik Bennabi's thought by examining the theoretical foundations underlying his civilizational project, highlighting the intellectual value of his civilizational approach, demonstrating its contemporary relevance to the interpretation of underdevelopment-related problems, and identifying the foundations of development in Arab and Islamic societies.

Keywords: Malik Bennabi, underdevelopment, civilization, civilizational project, colonizability, civilizational effectiveness.

Introduction:

The issue of underdevelopment and development is one of the most prominent concerns that has received considerable attention in contemporary Islamic thought. Numerous approaches have sought to explain the causes of underdevelopment. Among the most prominent Muslim thinkers who succeeded in diagnosing the causes of the underdevelopment of the Islamic world and proposing ways to overcome this condition is Malik Bennabi, who shed light on dimensions that had been overlooked by many thinkers of his time.

Based on this perspective, Malik Bennabi sought to diagnose the manifestations of underdevelopment and investigate its causes. He also developed a comprehensive conception

of the conditions necessary for civilizational construction within an integrated framework. In doing so, he went beyond traditional economic and political explanations and focused on the intellectual, cultural, and social factors that shape the development and functioning of societies.

Discussing the process of civilizational renewal requires an integrated conception of the conditions for development and the mechanisms of civilizational construction by activating the elements of civilization in order to overcome underdevelopment. Accordingly, the following central research question can be formulated:

How did Malik Bennabi explain the phenomenon of underdevelopment, and what conditions and mechanisms are required to achieve civilizational reconstruction within Malik Bennabi's civilizational project?

This central question gives rise to the following sub-questions:

What is meant by underdevelopment in Malik Bennabi's thought?

What are the causes of underdevelopment according to Malik Bennabi?

What are the manifestations of underdevelopment from Malik Bennabi's perspective?

What is Malik Bennabi's conception of the conditions for building civilization and achieving development?

What mechanisms did Malik Bennabi propose for overcoming underdevelopment and achieving civilizational reconstruction?

Research Hypotheses

In Malik Bennabi's thought, underdevelopment constitutes a comprehensive civilizational crisis that goes beyond purely economic and political explanations.

The phenomenon of underdevelopment is associated with internal factors, most notably colonizability, the crisis of ideas, and the decline of civilizational effectiveness.

Overcoming underdevelopment requires reforming the internal factors of society, particularly the human being, ideas, culture, and the network of social relations.

Malik Bennabi's civilizational project constitutes an integrated vision of development based on activating the elements of civilization and achieving civilizational effectiveness.

Objectives of the Study

To highlight the concept of underdevelopment in Malik Bennabi's thought and analyze its causes and manifestations.

To identify the theoretical foundations of Malik Bennabi's civilizational project.

To explain the conditions for development and the mechanisms of civilizational construction in his thought.

To highlight the intellectual value of the civilizational approach developed by Malik Bennabi in addressing issues of underdevelopment and development.

Methodology

This study adopts the descriptive-analytical approach by analyzing the key concepts underlying Malik Bennabi's civilizational project and examining the relationship between the problem of underdevelopment, the conditions for development, and the mechanisms of civilizational reconstruction. This approach makes it possible to understand the intellectual framework governing his civilizational vision and to highlight the interconnectedness of its various components.

Structure of the Study:

Section One: Diagnosing Underdevelopment in Malik Bennabi's Thought

Section Two: The Conditions for Development in Malik Bennabi's Civilizational Project

Section Three: Mechanisms for the Transition from Underdevelopment to Development in Malik Bennabi's Thought

Axis One: Diagnosing Underdevelopment in the Thought of Malek Bennabi

Malek Bennabi began by seeking to explain the causes of the incapacity experienced by Muslim societies. He sought to investigate the civilizational and intellectual roots of the crisis, considering that renaissance cannot be achieved without an accurate diagnosis of the causes and manifestations of underdevelopment. From this perspective, Malek Bennabi addressed a number of explanatory concepts that constituted the foundation of his analysis of the civilizational crisis, foremost among which are the concepts of civilizational underdevelopment, susceptibility to colonization, and the crisis of ideas.

First: The Concept of Civilizational Underdevelopment in the Thought of Malek Bennabi

Malek Bennabi defined underdevelopment as the social condition in which human beings exist at the pre-civilizational stage, where their concerns are confined to the world of things without an awareness of the civilizational conditions necessary for building society.¹ In his view, civilizational underdevelopment represents a state of stagnation of social energies resulting from a disruption in the relationship between the fundamental elements of civilization, namely the human being, soil, and time. Therefore, according to Malek Bennabi, underdevelopment is not limited merely to the economic dimension; rather, it encompasses various dimensions of civilizational life, resulting in weak social effectiveness and the disruption of the process of civilizational advancement. Accordingly, the problems falling within the concept of underdevelopment are merely manifestations of a deeper civilizational crisis whose internal causes must be addressed before examining the external factors that explain it.²

Malek Bennabi emphasizes that the problem of underdevelopment in the Islamic world does not stem from a lack of resources or capabilities, but rather from a weak capacity to invest in and utilize them in the process of civilizational construction. This is primarily attributable to the absence of a civilizational consciousness capable of transforming available resources into effective elements of development. Therefore, overcoming underdevelopment requires reorganizing social life in accordance with the available resources and the civilizational specificities of society, in a manner consistent with the conditions of renaissance and the requirements of civilizational construction.³

Based on this conception, Malek Bennabi criticized modernization projects that approached underdevelopment solely from a material and technical perspective while neglecting the intellectual and cultural dimensions of the crisis. He argues that this approach resulted in

¹ Malek Bennabi, *Reflections* (Damascus: Dar al-Fikr, 2002), p. 61.

² Al-Bashir Qalati, *Beyond Malek Bennabi: Towards Renewing Civilizational Discourse in Confronting the Challenges of the Twenty-First Century* (Algeria: Al-Asala Publishing and Distribution Company, 2019), p. 83.

³ Qada Bahri, *Economic Milestones in the Thought of Malek Bennabi* (Algeria: Al-Asala Publishing and Distribution Company, 2018), p. 92.

partial solutions that were unable to address the actual causes of underdevelopment or bring about sustainable civilizational transformation.¹

Second: Causes of Civilizational Underdevelopment

From Malek Bennabi's perspective, several factors contributed to the emergence of the phenomenon of underdevelopment, including the following:

1. Susceptibility to Colonization:

Malek Bennabi defined susceptibility to colonization as a set of negative intellectual, psychological, social, and political conditions that place society in a state of weakness and incapacity in the face of the challenges surrounding it, thereby causing it to lose its ability to resist and leading it into a state of civilizational decline.²

He argues that this susceptibility does not merely reflect an external impact of colonization; rather, it expresses an internal condition of a society that has exited the cycle of civilization or is experiencing a post-civilizational stage, in which it loses its effective spiritual and intellectual elements and replaces them with patterns of negative habits and ideas that hinder its historical movement. In this context, Bennabi explains that “every society creates, by itself, the ideas that will kill it (killing ideas), but these ideas subsequently remain within its social heritage (dead ideas)... They remain compatible with its habits and continue to exert their effect upon it from within.”³ Thus, these ideas and habits constitute the internal structure that produces what Bennabi calls the “complex of susceptibility to colonization,” which, in turn, represents one of the profound causes of societal underdevelopment and the persistence of its civilizational incapacity.⁴

2. External Causes of Underdevelopment (Colonization):

Colonization constitutes one of the external factors that contributed to deepening the crisis of underdevelopment in Muslim societies. Malek Bennabi distinguished between two forms of colonization:

Despotic colonization: This seeks to erase the individual's identity and weaken the foundations and constituents of society.

Restrained colonization: This is characterized by a certain degree of flexibility and sometimes takes the form of protection or indirect guardianship.⁵

Despite the differences between their methods, both forms hinder the process of civilizational advancement and perpetuate the state of underdevelopment.⁶ The impact of colonization is not limited to political or economic domination; rather, it extends to the intellectual and social structure of society. It contributes to perpetuating manifestations of corruption, weakening reform initiatives, and obstructing every project aimed at restoring civilizational effectiveness. It also seeks to disseminate destructive ideas that reinforce dependency and limit society's

¹ Malek Bennabi, *In the Midst of the Battle*, 1st ed. (Damascus: Dar al-Fikr, 1991), p. 67.

² Muhammad Atef, *Obstacles to and Foundations of Renaissance in the Thought of Malek Bennabi* (Algeria: Dar Qurtuba for Publishing and Distribution, 2009), p. 55.

³ Malek Bennabi, *In the Midst of the Battle*, op. cit., p. 130.

⁴ Al-Taher Saud, *Underdevelopment and Development in the Thought of Malek Bennabi* (Beirut: Dar al-Hadi for Printing, Publishing and Distribution, 2006), p. 149.

⁵ *Ibid*, p. 149.

⁶ Malek Bennabi, *The Orientation of the Islamic World*, trans. Abd al-Sabour Shahin (Damascus: Dar al-Fikr, 2002), p. 110.

ability to produce its own ideas.¹ Furthermore, it attempts to marginalize religion from its civilizational function and prevent it from fulfilling its role in mobilizing and directing social energies toward construction and progress.²

Consequently, colonization represents a factor that reinforces underdevelopment by targeting the fundamental components upon which civilization is based. This affects the world of ideas, persons, and things, leading to the disruption of the development process and weakening society's ability to regain its historical effectiveness. Colonization therefore seeks to implant the idea of dependency in the minds of the peoples of the colonies, which Malek Bennabi refers to as the “complex of dependency.” Thus, colonized countries experience a range of psychological, social, and cultural imbalances that render society conditioned for the process of colonization.³ The distortion of deeply rooted cultural values contributes to preparing the ground for absolute domination, thereby leaving society distant from any future rebellion.⁴ Consequently, the colonizer finds itself surrounded within an artificial circle and therefore seeks to destroy every attempt or source of energy capable of challenging it.⁵ Colonization thus worked to distort the individual's equation and restrict his activity.⁶

Axis Two: The Conditions for Development in Malik Bennabi's Civilizational Project

1. The Intellectual Crisis:

Ideas occupy a fundamental position in Malik Bennabi's civilizational project, as they constitute the element that guides the behavior of individuals and societies. Their importance is manifested in two forms: either as factors contributing to the advancement of social life, or as pathological factors that hinder the process of social development.⁷

Malik Bennabi argues that the crisis of the Islamic world is attributable to the decline of the world of ideas, which has become incapable of fulfilling its role. It has merely resorted to transmitting ideas without critically examining or filtering them, resulting in the stagnation of intellectual life.⁸

A. The Spread of Dead and Deadly Ideas:

A dead idea is an idea that has deviated from its ideal, lost its capacity to exert influence, and become incapable of guiding behavior or contributing to the process of civilizational construction.⁹

Deadly ideas, on the other hand, are ideas that have lost their identity and value and are transferred to a society without taking its cultural specificities into consideration. Detaching

¹ Malek Bennabi, trans. Omar Mesqaoui and Abd al-Sabour Shahin, *The Conditions of the Renaissance* (Algeria: Dar al-Wa'i for Publishing and Distribution, 2013), p. 151.

² Malek Bennabi, *The Orientation of the Islamic World*, Vol. 1, op. cit., p. 116.

³ Al-Bashir Qalati, *Beyond Malek Bennabi: Towards Renewing Civilizational Discourse in Confronting the Challenges of the Twenty-First Century* (Algeria: Al-Asala Publishing and Distribution Company, 2019), p. 102.

⁴ Imran Boudaqzdam, *Renewal in Malek Bennabi's Civilizational Project* (Algeria: Dar al-Huda for Printing, Publishing and Distribution, 2015), p. 41.

⁵ Malek Bennabi, *The Orientation of the Islamic World*, op. cit., p. 110.

⁶ Malek Bennabi, *The Conditions of the Renaissance*, op. cit., pp. 149–150.

⁷ Fouad Abd al-Rahman, *The Civilizational Rise between Malik Bennabi and Fethullah Gülen*, *Majallat Kitab al-Ummah*, No. 155, Thirty-Third Year, p. 90.

⁸ Malek Bennabi, *The Problem of Culture*, trans. Abd al-Sabour Shaheen, 4th ed. (Damascus: Dar al-Fikr, 2000), p. 19.

⁹ Malik Bennabi, *Reflections*, cited above, pp. 166–167.

such ideas from the context in which they originated transforms them into obstructive elements that hinder development. This contributes to intensifying the civilizational crisis and deepening intellectual dependency¹

The disorder witnessed in the Islamic world stems from dead ideas that have lost their effectiveness² resulting in the disappearance of the logical connection between thought and material outcomes³ Consequently, social activity has been transformed into practices lacking effectiveness. The manifestations of the decline of the world of ideas can be observed in the following:

B. The Tendency toward Accumulation:

Bennabi argues that the decline of the world of ideas is an inevitable consequence of the expansion and dominance of the worlds of things and persons⁴ These consequently become pathological factors that hinder the advancement of social life and make social development difficult or even impossible⁵ This is because the absence of ideas capable of planning for development creates an accumulative mentality that theorizes about accumulating things rather than constructing through them⁶ This way of thinking is further replaced by importing developmental approaches and ideas from developed countries, which cannot succeed or become effective in underdeveloped countries due to differences in the social framework of each country⁷

C. The Decline of the World of Ideas and the Dominance of the World of Things

One of the manifestations of the decline of the world of ideas is the dominance of the world of things over human activity. This situation arises as a result of the separation of ideas from action and the loss of their guiding function. In a healthy society, things are merely means employed to achieve specific civilizational objectives. However, an imbalance between the world of ideas and the world of things causes the object to shift from being a means to becoming an end in itself.

This results from separating the idea from activity. Instead of the thing being a means at the service of human beings, it becomes an end in itself. Consequently, the dominance of things over human mentality emerges, and material possessions become the criterion according to which judgments are made⁸ This gives rise to a materialistic mentality that measures the value of individuals and societies according to what they possess in terms of things and material means, rather than according to their ability to produce, innovate, and generate ideas.

Accordingly, an individual's social status becomes associated with the extent of their possessions and material resources rather than with their contribution to civilizational

¹ Malik Bennabi, *The Birth of a Society*, trans. Abd al-Sabour Shaheen (Damascus: Dar al-Fikr, 1985), p. 95.

² Mohammed Atif, *Obstacles to and Requirements of Renaissance in the Thought of Malik Bennabi*, cited above, p. 27.

³ Malik Bennabi, *The Problem of Ideas in the Muslim World*, cited above, p. 79.

⁴ Mohammed Atif, cited above, pp. 29–30.

⁵ Malik Bennabi, *The Problem of Ideas in the Muslim World*, cited above, p. 82.

⁶ Malik Bennabi, *The Problem of Culture*, trans. Abd al-Sabour Shaheen, 4th ed. (Damascus: Dar al-Fikr, 2000), p. 14.

⁷ Malik Bennabi, *The Direction of the Muslim World*, cited above, p. 65.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 153.

construction or knowledge production. Thus, an individual's social standing derives primarily from the quantity of things and resources at their disposal ¹

Consequently, this produces a profound crisis manifested in the accumulation of things without making effective use of them, due to the absence of ideas capable of contributing to genuine progress.

D.The Dominance of the World of Persons

Another manifestation of the civilizational crisis is the dominance of the world of persons. This situation results from the decline of the role of ideas and the transformation of individuals into the central focus of social and political life ²

Malik Bennabi argues that underdeveloped societies tend to associate change with individuals rather than ideas. Values and projects are therefore reduced to particular persons who are regarded as the source of solutions and the center of social action

Bennabi emphasizes that the dominance of individuals at the expense of ideas produces negative consequences at both the ethical and political levels. The mistakes of individuals may become socially justified or accepted models. Moreover, concentrating political action around leaders and individuals weakens institutions and obstructs the role of ideas in guiding society. Loyalty to individuals consequently replaces commitment to principles and ideas.

In such circumstances, an individual's position within society becomes associated with their influence or symbolic status rather than with their intellectual or civilizational contribution. As a result, the spirit of initiative and critical thinking declines, while the tendency toward following and imitation increases at the expense of creativity and active participation in building society. Thus, the dominance of the world of persons becomes one of the factors explaining the persistence of underdevelopment and obstructing the process of civilizational revival in underdeveloped societies, particularly in the Arab and Islamic world.

The analysis of Malik Bennabi demonstrates that underdevelopment does not merely represent economic or technological backwardness; rather, it reflects a comprehensive civilizational crisis in which internal and external factors intersect. The colonizability constitutes the internal foundation of the crisis, while colonialism contributes to deepening and perpetuating it.

This crisis is reflected in the worlds of ideas, persons, and things, where civilizational effectiveness declines and the role of ideas in guiding society becomes weakened. Therefore, overcoming underdevelopment requires addressing its intellectual and civilizational roots before seeking material solutions. This, in turn, leads to an examination of the conditions for development within Malik Bennabi's civilizational project.

Axis Three: Mechanisms for Civilizational Reconstruction to Overcome Underdevelopment

First: Reactivating the Elements of Civilization.

Second: Reconstructing the World of Ideas and Culture.

Third: Rebuilding the Network of Social Relations and Achieving Civilizational Effectiveness.

¹ Youssef Azroual, "The Phenomenon of Underdevelopment and the Issue of Development: A Study in the Light of Malik Bennabi's Thought," Algerian Journal of Security and Development, Vol. 8, No. 15, July 2019, p. 51.

² Malik Bennabi, The Direction of the Muslim World, cited above, p. 83.

Introduction

Malek Bennabi began by diagnosing the causes and manifestations of underdevelopment in various aspects of social life. However, he did not confine himself to criticism and diagnosis; rather, he sought to put forward an integrated civilizational project aimed at rebuilding society and restoring its historical effectiveness. This project is based on establishing the civilizational conditions capable of transforming the elements of society from a state of stagnation into an active force in history.

First: Activating the Elements of Civilizational Construction

The formation of a society that provides individuals with social guarantees requires the provision of the “conditions of civilization”¹ Therefore, it is necessary to work on activating the elements of civilization and addressing the problems that have hindered the civilizational process, which include²:

The problem of man: identifying the conditions necessary for his harmony with the course of history.

The problem of land: determining the conditions for its utilization within the social process.

The problem of time: instilling its meaning in the spirit of society and in the individual’s psychology.

1. Man:

Man occupies a central position in Bennabi’s renaissance model, as he is regarded as the driving force of society and history³. Any attempt at advancement and development requires bringing about a radical transformation in the reality of man and producing a new human being capable of formulating major objectives that can be transformed into a living reality. This transformation can be achieved through the making of men⁴ who “move through history, using land, time, and talents to build great objectives”⁵

Such effectiveness can be achieved by reshaping and directing man through the direction of culture, the direction of work, and the direction of capital. These are the means through which the individual can influence reality through his ideas, work, and financial resources⁶

2. Land:

Malek Bennabi viewed land as one of the fundamental elements in the civilizational equation. However, his conception of land was not limited to its material dimension represented by the physical territory; rather, he regarded it as a resource constituting one of the foundations of the civilizational equation. Accordingly, he called for its proper utilization within the social process.

He maintained that the state of underdevelopment experienced by backward societies is not so much related to the scarcity of resources as it is to man’s inability to exploit them effectively

¹ Malek Bennabi, *Reflections*, op. cit., p. 29.

² Ibid, p. 201.

³ Ibid, p. 129.

⁴ Mohamed Jelloul Al-Farhan, *The Renaissance Discourse in the Thought of Malek Bennabi*, (Algeria: Dar Ben Merabet Publishing, 2014), p. 40.

⁵ Malek Bennabi, *The Conditions of the Renaissance*, op. cit., p. 82.

⁶ Malek Bennabi, *The Conditions of the Renaissance*, ibid., p. 83.

and productively, owing to the backwardness of the people who inhabit the land¹. He addressed the problem of land from two perspectives:

The legal (legislative) dimension: through which the relationship between man and land is established by means of ownership within society.

The technical dimension: referring to the aspect of technical control and utilization, such as the science of land and the knowledge associated with it, including chemistry and other related fields ²Bennabi calls upon man, as the “owner of the land,” to employ technical and scientific means to solve the problems associated with this land and to make proper use of it ³

Thus, the effectiveness of land does not derive from its natural characteristics in themselves, but rather from the relationship that connects man to it. Consequently, the formation of an active human being who is conscious of the value of time, together with efforts to transform resources toward the process of civilizational construction, constitutes a fundamental condition for achieving civilizational effectiveness.

3. Time:

Ben Nabi regards time as an influential factor in human thought and activity, as well as in the formation of meanings and the development of things. Society must therefore adapt to time and transform it into a productive social dimension by incorporating it into the planning and implementation of industrial and economic projects ⁴This is precisely what Arab-Muslim societies lack, and they must shed light on the problem of time and determine a starting point for achieving genuine development.⁵ Ben Nabi further argues that the proper utilization of time can only be achieved by introducing the concept of time and its social value into individuals’ consciousness through the process of education.⁶ He states: “There is no doubt that education is the necessary means through which the Arab-Muslim people can fully learn the value of this matter.”⁷

Accordingly, investing time requires a transition from a culture of wasting it to a culture of utilizing it, and from consuming it passively to transforming it into a civilizational asset reflected in work, production, and achievement, as it constitutes one of the fundamental conditions for any project of civilizational renaissance.

4. The Religious Idea as a Mechanism for Activating Civilizational Elements

The religious idea occupies a central position in Malek Bennabi’s civilizational project, as he considers it the fundamental factor in the emergence of civilizations and in directing their historical trajectory.⁸ Religion represents the driving force that moves human beings from a state of stagnation and indifference to a state of action and civilizational construction. It is the force that unleashes human energies and enables individuals to free themselves from

¹ Mohamed Jelloul Al-Farhan, op. cit., p. 45.

² Malek Bennabi, Reflections, op. cit., p. 170.

³ Al-Taher Saoud, op. cit., p. 222.

⁴ Fawzia Brion, op. cit., p. 232.

⁵ Mohammed Jaloub Al-Farhan, op. cit., pp. 50–51.

⁶ Al-Taher Saoud, op. cit., p. 224.

⁷ Malek Bennabi, The Conditions of the Renaissance, op. cit., p. 147.

⁸ Omar Naqib, The Foundations for Building the Civilized Human Being in the Educational Thought of Malek Bennabi: Toward the Renewal of a New Educational Theory for the Contemporary Islamic World (Algeria: Kalila Publishing, 2013), p. 71.

constraints, thereby allowing them to exert an influence on their human environment through the impetus it provides to the self to contribute to changing the course of history.¹

Bennabi views the religious idea as a human and civilizational phenomenon that has accompanied various historical experiences. No civilization has emerged without being founded upon a system of beliefs or values that constituted its intellectual and ethical frame of reference. Therefore, the importance of the religious idea does not lie solely in its devotional dimension, but also in its ability to create social cohesion and establish a system of values that directs individual and collective behavior toward work, production, and civilizational contribution. The role of the religious idea lies in integrating the elements of civilization, strengthening the educational formation of the human personality, and regulating human behavior, because it nourishes its psychological foundations²

Bennabi emphasizes that civilization entails bringing about a profound transformation in the way human beings perceive the world and themselves. It motivates them to participate in the making of history according to a distinctive civilizational model based on the centrality of the religious idea in the process of construction and renaissance, thereby distinguishing it from other cultures and civilizations.³

Second: Rebuilding at the Cultural Level

Raising the awareness of intellectual elites on the one hand and the broader masses on the other constitutes the cornerstone of the process of civilizational renewal. Developing a cultural frame of reference for contemporary Muslims and reviving their value-based heritage was one of the objectives that Malek Bennabi sought to achieve through his proposal of a partial cultural project within the broader framework of the civilizational system. Culture thus constitutes the foundation of social existence and its continuity within consciousness. More specifically, culture represents the production of a society's material self, that is, its capacity for growth and development within the process of civilizational advancement.⁴

Malek Bennabi considers culture one of the essential components of civilizational construction. Culture constitutes the space within which human beings operate, bringing together the characteristics of the individual and the components of society so that they become integrated, which makes civilizational advancement possible. From Malek Bennabi's perspective, culture is "a theory of knowledge, a methodology of behavior, and an approach to work, construction, and confrontation."⁵

Thus, culture is the domain that determines a society's worldview and regulates its patterns of thought. This contributes to the formation of collective consciousness and the orientation of individual energies toward common objectives. It consequently makes it possible to transform ideas into an effective force capable of bringing about civilizational change by directing and shaping culture.

¹ Imran Boudghezdam, op. cit., p. 273.

² Omar Naqib, op. cit., p. 71.

³ Fawzia Brion, Malek Bennabi: His Era, His Life, and His Theory of Civilization (Damascus: Dar Al-Fikr, 2010), p. 202.

⁴ Nazem Abd al-Wahid al-Jasour, Encyclopedia of Political Science (Amman: Majdalawi Publishing and Distribution House, 2009), p. 143.

⁵ Al-Tayyeb Berghout, The Centrality of the Cultural Dimension in Malek Bennabi's Strategy for Civilizational Renewal (Algeria: Dar Al-Shatibiyya for Publishing and Distribution, 1st ed., 2012), pp. 99.

1. Cultural Guidance as a Mechanism for Civilizational Reconstruction from the Perspective of Malek Bennabi

This can be achieved by establishing a program for cultural guidance,¹ and by purifying our customs, traditions, and moral and social framework of the destructive factors they contain. From Malek Bennabi's perspective, the renewal of conditions takes place through two approaches:²

The first: A negative approach that separates us from the remnants of the past.

The second: A positive approach that connects us to the requirements of the future.

Malek Bennabi emphasizes cultural specificity in the process of reconstruction. This awareness is what contributes to shaping the motivations that awaken the will of individuals and society, enabling them to rise to the challenge of overcoming underdevelopment.³

Culture, in its functional dimension, is closely linked to effectiveness because it transforms the individual from a person driven by individualistic tendencies into a social personality.⁴ It must therefore be cleansed of superfluous elements and deviations,⁵ defined as a historical factor to facilitate its understanding, and subsequently established as an educational system to be disseminated among the various social classes.⁶ According to Malek Bennabi, any failure is linked to the cultural crisis through which society is passing.⁷

2. The Relationship Between Culture and Civilization:

Culture intervenes in all aspects of the individual's affairs and particularities and seeks to build society. It becomes a way of life within society, influencing all its dimensions. The relationship between culture and its four constituent elements represents its fundamental program.⁸ Culture works to instill harmony within society, thereby strengthening the bond of shared sentiment. Consequently, it is necessary to rectify our relationship with culture in⁹ order to ensure our return to the path of civilizational development.¹⁰ Culture thus becomes a theory of conduct* rather than merely a theory of knowledge.¹¹ Any failure experienced by a society in one of its endeavors is, in fact, a genuine expression of the degree of the cultural crisis through which it is passing¹².

¹ Malek Bennabi, *The Problem of Culture*, previously cited work, p. 69.

² Malek Bennabi, *The Conditions of the Renaissance*, previously cited work, p. 80.

³ Mohamed Baghdad Bay, *Education and Civilization: An Inquiry into the Concept of Education and the Nature of Its Relationship with Civilization in Malek Bennabi's Thought* (Algeria: Alam al-Afkar Publishing and Distribution, 2007), p. 125.

⁴ Imran Boudakzdam, previously cited work, p. 158.

⁵ Malek Bennabi, *The Conditions of the Renaissance*, previously cited work, p. 83.

⁶ Malek Bennabi, *The Problem of Culture*, previously cited work, p. 72.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 92.

⁸ Saoud Mohamed and Zerroukhi al-Darraj, "The Psychological Structure of Culture and Its Relationship to Beauty in Malek Bennabi's Thought," *Journal of Social and Human Sciences*, Vol. 7, No. 13, December 2017, p. 258.

⁹ Fatima al-Zahra Saidani, *The Position of the Network of Social Relations in Civilizational Construction According to Malek Bennabi* (Algeria: Kitabak, 2014), p. 100.

¹⁰ Houria Bekouche, "Simplifying the Concept of Culture in Malek Bennabi's Thought: A Study of the Concept of Culture and Its Elements," *Rufuf Journal*, Vol. 4, No. 2, December 2016, p. 129.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 64.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 92.

Second: Intellectual Reconstruction

The process of purifying ideas is essential, as it is impossible to undertake reconstruction using means that are simultaneously destructive. Therefore, it is necessary to search for authentic ideas through which they can be reactivated and a project of renaissance can be established. For this reason, Malek Bennabi emphasized the recovery of original ideas as a means of overcoming the state of dependency and constructing a civilizational model. This is achieved through the stage of purification, which is essential for removing the intellectual and cultural obstacles that hinder the realization of renaissance.¹

Malek Bennabi asserts that the success of renaissance projects remains contingent upon society's ability to eliminate dead and death-dealing ideas, as these obstruct the path toward renaissance.²

It is therefore necessary to restore the authenticity of thought and establish an intellectual frame of reference rooted in the civilizational specificity of society.³ This requires purifying the world of ideas as an initial step, followed by the search for ideas capable of guiding social conduct, mobilizing society's forces toward reconstruction, and overcoming civilizational dependency.⁴

Third: Reconstructing a Strong Network of Social Relations

A network of social relations is one of the fundamental conditions for achieving civilizational advancement.⁵ Through the existence of a reciprocal and complementary relationship between the individual and society, the individual's work becomes oriented toward the public interest, while society works to provide the conditions that enable individuals to perform their duties.⁶

Malek Bennabi does not view society merely as a number of individuals constituting the social structure. Rather, he refers to the conditioned and adapted individual,⁷ who contributes to shaping a qualitative society that proceeds according to a common orientation. It is impossible for society to maintain its continuity and achieve advancement without embodying this relationship.⁸ This process is accomplished through the transformation of the individual, which, in turn, affects the course and historical dynamism of society, increasing its effectiveness. This strengthens society and enables it to assume its responsibilities within collective action, bringing its members together on the path toward the emerging civilization.⁹ Every society has a goal toward which it moves: it either advances and develops a civilization or regresses into underdevelopment. Any society seeking to achieve progress must work to

¹ Ahmed Kass, "The Strategic Foundations for Building the Civilizational Project According to Malek Bennabi," *Al-Midad Journal*, Vol. 2, No. 1, June 2014, p. 157.

² *Ibid.*, p. 84.

³ Malek Bennabi, *The Problem of Ideas in the Muslim World*, previously cited work, p. 41.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 162.

⁵ Hassan Abdullah Hassan, *The Civilizational Project According to Malek Bennabi: A Contemporary Reading* (Cairo: Mufakkirun International Publishing and Distribution, 2019), p. 168.

⁶ Mohamed Ben Sebaa, "The Philosophy of Social Change in Malek Bennabi's Thought: How to Build a Civilization from an Islamic Perspective," *Afaq Fikriya Journal*, Vol. 4, No. 2, 2018, p. 293.

⁷ Malek Bennabi, *The Birth of a Society*, previously cited work, p. 65.

⁸ Fatima al-Zahra Saidani, previously cited work, p. 33.

⁹ Mohamed al-Atif, *Obstacles to and Foundations of Renaissance in Malek Bennabi's Thought*, previously cited work, p. 127.

reform its network of social relations in order to overcome obstacles. No society can carry out collective activity without a network of relationships that brings together its various psychological and temporal elements.¹ Thus, the first action undertaken by any society seeking to transform itself is linked to the completion of its network of social relations, which constitutes the foundation of any project.²

A number of elements influence the construction of the network of relationships. Their interaction shapes the civilizational structure necessary for it and affects its civilizational effectiveness and the nature of its functioning,³ namely:

1. Social Education:

The formation of harmonious social relationships falls within the framework of social education, which seeks to develop an individual who is well-adjusted to society. Through the fulfillment of a set of conditions, the individual becomes capable of undertaking productive work, and social education contributes to embodying these conditions.⁴ The nature of the social structure cannot, by itself, ensure its survival, achieve progress, or initiate the process of civilization merely through the components of art, science, and reason. Rather, it is the spirit that enables humanity to rise and advance, while religion assumes a spiritual dimension.⁵ Socially, religion plays a role in structuring values and transforming the organic individual into a social unit.⁶ It is considered a vital energy that nourishes the individual's activity and drives them toward collective action.⁷ When religion creates the spiritual network, it thereby establishes a connection between the objectives of Heaven and those of Earth.⁸ Thus, entry into the realm of civilization takes place through the conditioned individual who learns how to live within a group while simultaneously recognizing the fundamental importance of the network of social relationships in organizing human life in order to fulfill its historical function.⁹

Ibn Nabi argues that the network of social relationships plays a role in the development of society and that the weakening of the bonds within this network is one of the most significant symptoms of underdevelopment and decline in society. The weakening of social ties reinforces individualism and the ego within society,¹⁰ making it difficult to achieve purposeful collective action. Consequently, the purpose of presenting ideas becomes self-display and showing off rather than investing efforts and ideas in solving problems.¹¹ Furthermore, corrupt relationships in the world of persons have negative consequences for the

¹ Malek Bennabi, *The Birth of a Society*, previously cited work, p. 48.

² Malek Bennabi, *The Birth of a Society*, previously cited work, p. 26.

³ Hassan Abdullah Hassan, *The Civilizational Project According to Malik Ibn Nabi: A Contemporary Reading*, previously cited reference, p. 171.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 81.

⁵ Belhadri Beloufa, "Malik Ibn Nabi and the Cosmic and Social Laws of Religion," *Journal of Human and Social Studies*, Vol. 08, No. 01, January 2019, p. 480.

⁶ Malik Ibn Nabi, *The Orientation of the Islamic World*, previously cited reference, p. 32.

⁷ Malik Ibn Nabi, *The Birth of a Society*, previously cited reference, p. 82.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 79.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 81.

¹⁰ Malik Ibn Nabi, *Reflections*, previously cited reference, p. 39.

¹¹ Al-Taher Saud, previously cited reference, p. 165.

worlds of ideas and things. The disintegration of the network of social relationships inevitably extends to the worlds of ideas and things in the form of deficiency and deprivation.¹

Accordingly, Ibn Nabi emphasizes that the disintegration of the network of social relationships does not affect the social sphere alone; rather, its impact extends to various aspects of civilizational life. This disintegration manifests itself as poverty in the world of ideas and incapacity in the world of things, making the reconstruction of this network an essential condition for restoring civilizational effectiveness and overcoming the state of underdevelopment.

Fourth: Civilizational Effectiveness

According to Ibn Nabi, this is one of the psychological manifestations prevalent in an underdeveloped Muslim society, in which the individual experiences a sense of superiority and arrogance. The individual believes that by performing the five daily prayers, they have attained perfection and therefore do not strive to modify their behavior or reform themselves.² This is because, according to Ibn Nabi, they establish a connection between the perfection and validity of the Sharia on the one hand and the soundness of the Muslim's social and civilizational position and performance on the other.³ Consequently, the connection between thought and its material outcome disappears: either the idea is not realized, or action is not connected to intellectual effort.⁴

Ibn Nabi points out that the Muslim, or the Muslim of the post-Almohad period, came to possess thought and speech devoid of effectiveness because they lacked any driving force toward action.⁵ Malik Ibn Nabi maintains that what this Muslim lacks is not the logic of the idea, but rather the logic of action and movement. Such a person does not think in order to act; instead, they merely produce abstract discourse. Moreover, they even resent those who engage in influential and effective thinking.⁶

Conclusion:

The study concluded that Malek Bennabi developed an integrated conception of the problem of underdevelopment. He went beyond partial explanations that attributed underdevelopment solely to economic and political factors, considering instead that underdevelopment constitutes a civilizational crisis associated with a number of factors that, collectively, contributed to perpetuating the state of underdevelopment. Malek Bennabi's intellectual creativity is particularly evident in his efforts to diagnose and examine the reality of the Islamic world and identify its shortcomings. In this regard, he addressed the various diseases affecting the Islamic world, as well as the manifestations characterizing the social ailments that had become widespread.

The study demonstrated that overcoming the state of underdevelopment requires the fulfillment of a set of conditions necessary for achieving the process of civilizational construction. This is a comprehensive civilizational process that requires restoring

¹ Malik Ibn Nabi, Reflections, previously cited reference, p. 42.

² Malik Ibn Nabi, The Orientation of the Islamic World, Vol. 1, previously cited reference, pp. 85–86.

³ Mohamed Atef, previously cited reference, p. 40.

⁴ Malik Ibn Nabi, The Orientation of the Islamic World, Vol. 1, previously cited reference, p. 83.

⁵ Ibid., p. 70.

⁶ Malik Ibn Nabi, The Conditions of the Renaissance, previously cited reference, p. 103.

effectiveness to the elements of civilizational construction and directing them appropriately. This can be achieved by constructing the world of ideas through a process of intellectual purification that enables the production of effective and productive ideas, in addition to activating and properly structuring the network of social relations, thereby contributing to the process of civilizational construction.

Accordingly, the civilizational project proposed by Malek Bennabi can be regarded as an integrated reformist vision that places human beings at the center of change, while considering culture and thought as essential tools upon which the process of civilizational construction is based.

Findings

Malek Bennabi views underdevelopment as a comprehensive civilizational crisis rather than merely an economic or technological problem.

The predisposition to colonization represents one of the main causes behind the persistence of underdevelopment and the stagnation of renaissance projects.

Colonialism seeks to perpetuate underdevelopment within societies by undermining the fundamental components upon which civilizational advancement is built. It therefore works to hinder the progressive development of these societies and keep them trapped in a cycle of dependency and underdevelopment.

The imbalance in the world of ideas leads to the dominance of the world of persons and the world of things, thereby weakening the civilizational effectiveness of society.

Any discussion of the process of civilizational renewal necessarily requires the existence of renaissance projects addressing all the elements of civilizational construction.

The process of civilizational construction is based on the interaction among the three elements constituting the civilizational equation: human beings, time, and soil.

Religious thought functions as a catalyst and activating force for directing social energies and integrating the elements of civilization within a comprehensive renaissance project.

Culture and the network of social relations are among the most important mechanisms contributing to building a cohesive society capable of overcoming underdevelopment.

In Malek Bennabi's thought, development is linked to society's ability to transform ideas into action and tangible achievements that enhance civilizational effectiveness.

Recommendations

Greater attention should be devoted to Malek Bennabi's civilizational thought, and his ideas should be incorporated into studies addressing development, renaissance, and social reform.

Greater emphasis should be placed on human development through reforming the educational and pedagogical system in ways that contribute to fostering initiative, creativity, and a culture of work.

Efforts should be made to promote a culture that generates effective and productive ideas while limiting manifestations of imitation and intellectual consumption.

The values of responsibility, cooperation, and collective action should be strengthened in order to reinforce social relations and enhance the level of social effectiveness.

The value of time should be reaffirmed in educational, cultural, and economic policies, given that it constitutes a fundamental civilizational resource.

Applied studies inspired by Malek Bennabi's concepts should be encouraged in order to address contemporary development challenges in Arab and Islamic societies.

Development policies should be directed toward human development and the enhancement of human capabilities, given that human beings constitute the primary agents of any sustainable civilizational project.

References:

- 1- Mohamed Baghdad Bay, *Education and Civilization: An Inquiry into the Concept of Education and the Nature of Its Relationship with Civilization in Malek Bennabi's Thought* (Algeria: Alam al-Afkar Publishing and Distribution, 2007), p. 125.
- 2- Saoud Mohamed and Zerroukhi al-Darraj, "The Psychological Structure of Culture and Its Relationship to Beauty in Malek Bennabi's Thought," *Journal of Social and Human Sciences*, Vol. 7, No. 13, December 2017, p. 258.
- 3- Fatima al-Zahra Saidani, *The Position of the Network of Social Relations in Civilizational Construction According to Malek Bennabi* (Algeria: Kitabak, 2014), p. 100.
- 4- Houria Bekouche, "Simplifying the Concept of Culture in Malek Bennabi's Thought: A Study of the Concept of Culture and Its Elements," *Rufuf Journal*, Vol. 4, No. 2, December 2016, p. 129.
- 5- Ahmed Kass, "The Strategic Foundations for Building the Civilizational Project According to Malek Bennabi," *Al-Midad Journal*, Vol. 2, No. 1, June 2014, p. 157.
- 6- Hassan Abdullah Hassan, *The Civilizational Project According to Malek Bennabi: A Contemporary Reading* (Cairo: Mufakkirun International Publishing and Distribution, 2019), p. 168.
- 7- Mohamed Ben Sebaa, "The Philosophy of Social Change in Malek Bennabi's Thought: How to Build a Civilization from an Islamic Perspective," *Afaq Fikriya Journal*, Vol. 4, No. 2, 2018, p. 293.
- 8- Hassan Abdullah Hassan, *The Civilizational Project According to Malik Ibn Nabi: A Contemporary Reading*, previously cited reference, p. 171.
- 9- Belhadri Beloufa, "Malik Ibn Nabi and the Cosmic and Social Laws of Religion," *Journal of Human and Social Studies*, Vol. 08, No. 01, January 2019, p. 480.
- 10- Omar Naqib, *The Foundations for Building the Civilized Human Being in the Educational Thought of Malek Bennabi: Toward the Renewal of a New Educational Theory for the Contemporary Islamic World* (Algeria: Kalila Publishing, 2013), p. 71.
- 11- Fawzia Brion, *Malek Bennabi: His Era, His Life, and His Theory of Civilization* (Damascus: Dar Al-Fikr, 2010), p. 202.
- 12- Nazem Abd al-Wahid al-Jasour, *Encyclopedia of Political Science* (Amman: Majdalawi Publishing and Distribution House, 2009), p. 143.
- 13- Al-Tayyeb Berghout, *The Centrality of the Cultural Dimension in Malek Bennabi's Strategy for Civilizational Renewal* (Algeria: Dar Al-Shatibiyya for Publishing and Distribution, 1st ed., 2012), pp. 99.
- 14- Mohamed Jelloul Al-Farhan, *The Renaissance Discourse in the Thought of Malek Bennabi*, (Algeria: Dar Ben Merabet Publishing, 2014), p. 40.
- 15- Fouad Abd al-Rahman, *The Civilizational Rise between Malik Bennabi and Fethullah Gülen*, *Majallat Kitab al-Ummah*, No. 155, Thirty-Third Year, p. 90.

- 16- Malik Bennabi, *The Problem of Culture*, trans. Abd al-Sabour Shaheen, 4th ed. (Damascus: Dar al-Fikr, 2000), p. 19.
- 17- Malik Bennabi, *The Birth of a Society*, trans. Abd al-Sabour Shaheen (Damascus: Dar al-Fikr, 1985), p. 95.
- 18- Malik Bennabi, *The Problem of Ideas in the Muslim World*, cited above, p. 40.
- 19- Malik Bennabi, *The Problem of Culture*, trans. Abd al-Sabour Shaheen, 4th ed. (Damascus: Dar al-Fikr, 2000), p. 14.
- 20- Malik Bennabi, trans. Bassam Baraka and Ahmad Shaabo, *The Problem of Ideas in the Muslim World* (Damascus: Dar al-Fikr, 2002), p. 153.
- 21- Youssef Azroual, "The Phenomenon of Underdevelopment and the Issue of Development: A Study in the Light of Malik Bennabi's Thought," *Algerian Journal of Security and Development*, Vol. 8, No. 15, July 2019, p. 51.
- 22- Al-Bashir Qalati, *Beyond Malek Bennabi: Towards Renewing Civilizational Discourse in Confronting the Challenges of the Twenty-First Century* (Algeria: Al-Asala Publishing and Distribution Company, 2019), p. 83.
- 23- Qada Bahri, *Economic Milestones in the Thought of Malek Bennabi* (Algeria: Al-Asala Publishing and Distribution Company, 2018), p. 92.
- 24- Malek Bennabi, *In the Midst of the Battle*, 1st ed. (Damascus: Dar al-Fikr, 1991), p. 67.
- 25- Muhammad Atef, *Obstacles to and Foundations of Renaissance in the Thought of Malek Bennabi* (Algeria: Dar Qurtuba for Publishing and Distribution, 2009), p. 55.
- 26- Al-Taher Saud, *Underdevelopment and Development in the Thought of Malek Bennabi* (Beirut: Dar al-Hadi for Printing, Publishing and Distribution, 2006), p. 149.
- 27- Malek Bennabi, *The Orientation of the Islamic World*, trans. Abd al-Sabour Shahin (Damascus: Dar al-Fikr, 2002), p. 110.
- 28- Malek Bennabi, trans. Omar Mesqaoui and Abd al-Sabour Shahin, *The Conditions of the Renaissance* (Algeria: Dar al-Wa'i for Publishing and Distribution, 2013), p. 151.
- 29- Al-Bashir Qalati, *Beyond Malek Bennabi: Towards Renewing Civilizational Discourse in Confronting the Challenges of the Twenty-First Century* (Algeria: Al-Asala Publishing and Distribution Company, 2019), p. 102.
- 30-Imran Boudaqzdam, *Renewal in Malek Bennabi's Civilizational Project* (Algeria: Dar al-Huda for Printing, Publishing and Distribution, 2015), p. 41.