

The Idea of Change and Philosophy of Renewal in Malek Bennabi's Thoughts

فكرة التغيير وفلسفة التجديد في فكر مالك بن نبي

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ملخص:

نحدد من خلال هذه الورقة كل الأبعاد و الرؤى المرتبطة بالفكر التجديدي المضاد في جوهره لفكرة التّكديس التي حاربها مالك بن نبي في كلّ مقارباته النظرية و مناهجه الفكرية. المفهوم الرئيسي، في هذا الصدد، هو أنّ هذا (المستعمر سابقاً) قد استطاع تحرير أرضه، ولكن ليس روحه و فكره لأن القيود الثقافية و الفكرية للمستعمر السابق و كذلك جملة من التّحديات لا تزال تقيّد عقله، وتكّلس فكره و تكّلس أفكاره الميّتة و المميّتة . يهدف البحث في هذا المقام إلى توضيح فلسفة التجديد مع فكرة التغيير في فكر مالك بن نبي و تؤكد نتائجه أن مالك بن نبي برؤيته للتغيير يكون قد وضّح إلى حد بعيد تحلّف الإنسان (المستعمر سابقاً) بعد استقلاله والذي أصبح مجرد مكّدس بارع للأفكار الميّتة و مستهلك سخي للإيديولوجيات الوافدة نتيجة انهماجه الداخلي. كتوصية ذات صلة، نؤكّد أن التّجديد في منظور مالك بن نبي هو علاج للبؤس الفكري و الإفلاس الحضاري للمستعمر بقابليته للاستعمار و أن إنسان الحضارة في معادلة بن نبي يجب إن يتّحول من فرد منهزم داخليا و خلية ميّتة في المجتمع إلى شخص يفكر و ينتج بتوجيه اجتماعي أخلاقي، جمالي، عملي و فني و بهذا يكون في عملية تجديد و تحرر مستمرين.

الكلمات المفتاحية: فكرة، التغيير، فلسفة، التجديد، مالك بن نبي

Abstract:

This paper **aims** at clarifying the philosophy of renewal and demystifying the idea of change in relation to the notion 'heaping up' fought by Malek Bennabi. Findings of the paper **confirm** that Bennabi's vision to renewal in his equation to civilization clarified to a very far extent the backwardness of the ex-colonized. As a pertinent recommendation, we **endorse** the fact that renewal for Bennabi is a 'therapy' to what he called 'intellectual misery', 'civilization bankruptcy' and fossilized 'heaping up' of dead/deadly ideas. By the end, we **conclude** that "Man of Civilization" in Bennabi's equation should move beyond being a dead cell in the society to a Man who thinks and produces with ethical, aesthetical, logical and artistic orientation and therefore he should be always on an ongoing process of change, renewal and freedom.

Keywords: Idea, Change, Philosophy, Renewal, Malek Bennabi

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1. INTRODUCTION

Malek Bennabi is one of the most accomplished and best-known contemporary Algerian thinkers; famous primarily by his reconciliation of Islamic thoughts with nationalism. He is known as well for what he called the ‘civilization’ cycle, issues of culture (s) (empirical and civilization culture), historical movement, problem of ideas, conditions of a renaissance, globalization, economics. Throughout all his books, ideas, he tried his best to narrate the experience(s) of Algeria as a nation with a spectral language in a progressive quest and search for non-existing limits of the nation’s “non-identity” or “de-identity”!

Malek Bennabi preserved the intellectual task as a ‘voice for the people’ who urged and dreamed of a civilization based on: (1) Reform; (2) Renewal and (3) Renaissance. He provided a renewed-vision to Islam far from being based on mere rituals, practiced blindly by ‘civilizationally’ soulless men. His works served as a model for this study which depicts the total change of the Algerian intellect during the period extending from 1954 to 1970’s using the following symbolic keywords: renewal, coloniability (colonizability), renaissance, Identity, inter-culture, shock, reaction, belonging, civilization, the colonial coefficient, heaping up, deadly/dead/effective/impressed/acquired ideas and misconceptions.

To test the stated assumption, content analysis, an examination of prevailing ideas and meta-theoretical models will be used as theories of civilization and about it resulted from the accumulation of knowledge, travels and experiences (Algeria, Libya, Egypt, Syria and Paris) that Malek Bennabi witnessed in his career as a student and later as a thinker. In this sketch, we shall provide those major events and stages in Bennabi’s life. The paper assumes as well the consensus on vitality of his thoughts; Malek Bennabi’s singularly provides a realistic perspective based on a genuine socio-intellectual-historical foundation with a valid comprehensive and meta-theorizing methodology, referring consciously to developed/printed, righteous/effective, dead/deadly and misconceptions. These misconceptions might cause civilization failure, according to Bennabi. All what should be done to keep advance, by the end, is to keep renewal of the effective and righteous ideas to end up with an advancing civilisational cycle forward towards internal strength with self-sovereignty and therefore inner freedom.

2. Key Notions and Underlying Concepts

2.1. On Philosophy of Renewal

With reference to many encyclopedias, including *World Book Encyclopedia: Philosophy of renewal* is the “Philosophy that seeks to establish and emphasize ‘learning from the crisis, ethical communication, communication that is prospective in nature, and effective and widespread organizational rhetoric’”¹. With a prospective approach, Lippett² established the organizational renewal theory that would lead organizations “to higher stages progressively” and to “preclude a decline toward a lower stage” of organizational recovery. This paper spots more light on the discourse of renewal of Malek Bennabi (A pure Algerian civilization project rooted as well in the Arab-Berber Islamic heritage) through his religious, cultural and intellectual fighting and writing in 1920’s to 1970’s Algeria. In this respect, a

¹ Philosophy of Renewal. *World Book Encyclopedia*. Chicago: Deluxe Edition, 2004. CD-ROM

² L., Lippitt, Gordon. *Organization renewal: a holistic approach to organization development* (2nd ed.). Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1982, p.20.

particular focus will be on the philosophy of renewal as a “multidimensional and multidisciplinary recovery and remedial philosophical theory to the crisis faced Algeria in the aforementioned period(s)”.

2.2.On Postmodernism

Postmodernism shows the ‘ethnic, sexual, social and cultural’ struggles in societies that are fully overwhelmed by ‘paradoxical’ phenomena. Nowadays, it is quite fashionable to criticize or reject modernism because of its ‘paradoxical and contradictory’ traits. The interpretation of the term is viewed differently by the Westerners and Arabs. “While postmodernism provokes nothing more than a ‘weary yawn’ in the West, the debate about modernity is raging in the Arab world. It seems that there can be no question of postmodernism there (Neuwirth, 2010, p. 25)”

Postmodernism is at once a counter and corrective movement to modernity. Mohammed Arkoun, Algerian philosopher, precedes the following assumption:

The space and time within which collective perceptions have formed ,self-understanding been formulated, formative world pictures originated ,they have been essentially shaped and monopolized by Western reason, codified in a scientific discourse that the West has conducted ,organized and demarked externally since the eighteenth century (Neuwirth, 2010, p. 26).

The peculiar and paradoxical mixture emerging in this respect ,comprising a modernity that is universal and a modernity that is specifically Western, points to the double-standard policy played by modernists. It results then the hegemony of the Western norms via the spread of modernity and the frequent ‘blind swallow’ of the Arabs to these norms.

As for literature, many critics find it better to define literary postmodernism against literary modernism which considered more popular. In numerous ways, postmodern literary styles serve to dispute, reverse, mock and reject the basic principles of Modernist literature. For instance, instead of following the modernist literary search for meaning in a chaotic world, postmodern literature tends to reject the very possibility of the meaning in any disarray way (Postmodernism in Literature)¹. The Postmodern novel and other literary genres, for example, are often presented as a parody or mimic of the Modernist literary quest for meaning. The same quest evidently appeared in many intellectual endeavors.

Furthermore, this paper emphasizes the formative influence of Malek Bennabi to raise consciousness among Algerians to ‘purify’ the ‘Algerian education and its philosophies’ from ideologies of the ex-colonizer instilled in the ‘Men of Boulitique’² (Musqawi, 2013) and ‘Intellectomane’³ (Bennabi, 2016). These beliefs should be stripped away from the Algerian mind towards an ‘intellectual decolonization’ after ‘land liberation.’

Malek Bennabi criticized major reformist and modernist creeds as overlooking the real causes of backwardness and emphasizing its symptoms. Muslims could not provide groundbreaking ideas and systematic foundations to ignite in Man of civilization the will to change as colonization was not the

¹ Post Modernism. *Encyclopedia Britannica. Encyclopedia Britannica Ultimate Reference Suite.* Chicago,2011.

² Men of politics and resonant populist speeches as called by Malek Bennabi

³ A French word used by Bennabi for Fake intellectuals who frequently showed off in public arenas.

unique cause of backwardness, but inner vulnerability and internal acceptance to an external colonial power, called by Bennabi, Coloniability or Colonizability facilitated the external colonial action and its permanence internally within the ex-colonized mind.

2.3. On Modernity and Islam

Islam and modernity is a hotly-debatable topic and worthily to be discussed in contemporary sociology of religion. The history of Islam chronicles different interpretations and approaches. As mentioned before, Modernity is a complex and multidimensional phenomenon rather than a simple, unified and coherent one. It has historically had different schools of thought moving in many directions.

Islamic modernists argued that Islam and modernity were in harmony and compatible and “asserted the need to reinterpret and reapply the principles and ideals of Islam to formulate new responses to the political, scientific, and cultural challenges of the West and of modern life (Esposito, 2000, p. 647)”. The reforms they proposed challenged the status quo maintained by the conservative Muslims scholars, who saw the established law as the ideal order that had to be followed and upheld the doctrine of El-taqlid (*imitation / blind following*) or El-Tekdis (*heaping up*).

Islamic modernists saw the resistance to change of the conservatives’ vision to any discourse about or of Islam. The Algerian *Muslim Ulema* association saw colonialism as a major cause for the problems the Muslim community was facing as well as its inability to counter western hegemony. Jamal al-Din al-Afghani (1838–1897), Mohammad Abdou (1849–1905), Mohammad Rashid Rida (1869–1935)¹, Sheick Abd El Hamid Ben Badis (1889-1940), Sheick El Beshir El-Ibrahimi (1889-1965) and Malek Bennabi (1905-1993) were the best-known leaders of Modernist and renewed Islamic discourse, of course with a moderate vision that spread massively in both the Arab Mashrik (Orient) and Maghreb (Occident).

3. On Malek Bennabi

3.1. Malek Bennabi. A Biographic Sketch²

“To make people understand...to teach them to know themselves”

Si’ Amor Derdur ,reformist.ālim,Aurès

(McDougall)³

Malek Bennabi tried to make people understand retardation and backwardness of the Islamic world. Theories of civilization and about it resulted from the accumulation of knowledge, travels and experiences that Malek Bennabi witnessed in his career as a student and later as a thinker. In this sketch we shall provide those major events and stages in Malek Bennabi’s life.

¹ Most Dates of birth and death deprived from *World Book Encyclopedia*.

² El-Mesawi, M. E.-T. (2006). Religion, Society, and Culture in Malik Bennabi's Thought. (I. M. Abu-Rabi, Ed.) *The Blackwell Companion to Contemporary Islamic Thought*.

³ McDougall, James. *History and the Culture of Nationalism in Algeria*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006.

- **1905:** Malek Bennabi was born in January in 1905 in Constantine; East of Algeria. He received his primary Quoranic and French schooling at Tébessa (A small town in the Far East of Algeria on the Tunisian-Algerian border) where his father worked as an officer in the Islamic judiciary;
- **From 1921-1925:** Malek Bennabi carried his secondary studies at the Mudressa or what was called as the Lycée Franco-Arabe of Constantine. In this period, he came into contact with the reformist movement founded and led by Sheick Abd El Hamid BenBadis;
- **1925:** He first attempted to carry his graduate studies in France ,but this attempt was unsuccessful due to the lack of financial means;
- **1927:** Malek Bennabi was appointed as assistant officer to the sharia court of *Aflou* South of Oran;
- **1928:** He was transferred to the court of Shelghoum Laid (Small town on the neighborhood of Constantine, East of Algeria) from which he resigned after a dispute with a French clerk of the court of the town;
- **1930:** Malek Bennabi went to Paris to continue his studies. Following a politically motivated rejection of his application in the French *National Institute for Oriental Studies*, in Paris, he joined a polytechnic school from which he graduated as an electrical engineer in 1935;
- **1931:** He became the Vice-President of the Muslim Association of North Africa in Paris. Under the pressure of hard financial conditions as a result of unemployment and his family's worsening conditions, Malek Bennabi wanted to leave France and immigrated to the Hejaz, Egypt or Albania;
- **1938:** Malek Bennabi became the director of the *Centre Culturel du Congrès Musulman Algérien* (Cultural Center of the Algerian Muslim Congress) founded by an Association of Algerian immigrant workers; the Center was closed by the French authorities just after few months of intensive activities;
- **1940:** Following a call for competitive test by the Japanese embassy in Paris, Malek Bennabi submitted to the embassy a serious study on Islam and Japan;
- **After the Second World war (1945):** Malek Bennabi was compelled to accept a job in Germany. There he managed to write his his first and seminal book *The Quoranic Phenomenon* .The manuscript of the book was subsequently destroyed during an air raid. Malek Bennabi re-wrote the book and published it in 1946 in Algiers;
- **From 1946:** Malek Bennabi started his unbroken career as a writer;
- **1947:** He published his only novel *Lebbeik* depicting the spiritual journey of a poor Algerian pilgrim to Mecca and El Midina.
- **1948:** Malek Bennabi first published his controversial book *:The Conditions of the Renaissance*;

- **1949-1955:** Malek Bennabi devoted his time to a sustained contribution to the major Muslim press in Algeria, namely *The Algerian Republic* led by Ferhat Abbas and the *Muslim Youth* of the *Ulema* Association led by Sheick El Bashir El Ibrahimi;
- **1954:** He published his fourth book the *Vocation of Islam* in Paris ;the publication was by the renowned Editions du Seuil;
- **1956:** Malek Bennabi was invited to India to present his book *L'Afro-Asiatisme* in which he set out the theoretical and cultural foundations of the non-alignment movement whose first seeds were sown during the Bandung Conference in 1955. The same year, he left France and ended up in Cairo where he decided to settle down;
- **On September 1, 1956:** He requested the political leadership of the Algerian *National Liberation Front (FLN)* in Cairo to be employed as military male nurse with the fighting units of the *National Liberation Army (ALN)* inside Algeria so that he could write the internal history of the Algerian revolution. He received no reply to his request;
- **June 1957:** Malek Bennabi published in Arabic, French and German a booklet under the title *SOS Algeria* in which he denounced the bloody atrocities committed by the French army against Algerians. He continued to defend the Algerian cause by his own means;
- **1957-1962:** Male Bennabi organized a series of informal seminal works for Muslim students in Cairo. This period witnessed richness in production and activism in travels since he published in French and Arabic his book *L'Afro-Asiatism* and other books as *On the Origins of Human Society*; *The Idea of Islamic Commonwealth* and *The Ideological Struggle in the Colonized Countries*); Bennabi travelled in the same period to Syria and Lebanon where he delivered interesting public talks and met many thinkers and intellectuals;
- **1964:** Malek *Bennabi* was appointed as Director of Higher Education. At the same time, he carried his intellectual activities and contributed regularly to the local press with weekly contributions in the French Journal *Révolution africaine* (African Revolution);
- **1968-1970:** After resigning from his position as Director of Higher Education, he devoted his life to intellectual activities, including seminars, conferences both at home and abroad. During this period, he founded the annual Conference on Islamic Thought that lasted up to the 1980s;
- **After 1970s,** Malek Bennabi published a number of other books ,including his *two-volume memoirs*, *Problem of Ideas in the Muslim World*, *Algerian Perspectives*, *Islam and Democracy ...*;
- **October 31, 1973:** After a long tour that took him in 1971 and 1972 to Mecca, Damascus and Beirut where he delivered numerous talks and seminars about “The Muslim Role in the Last Third of the Twentieth Century”, Bennabi died I Algiers and buried there¹ (El-Mesawi, 2006)

¹ Umar Kamil Musqawi. *In the Company of Malik Bennabi. Path toward New Construction*. two-volume memoirs. Beirut: Dar El Fikr El Muassir, 2013. p955

3.2. Malek Bennabi and the Essence of Civilisation Renewal

“The problem of every people, in its essence, is that of civilization”

Malek Bennabi¹

Malek Bennabi's ideas will be compared to those expressed by thinkers, economists, sociologists, and management scientists as well as to those specifically advocated by Arab and Muslim intellectuals, with a view to delineate the comprehensiveness of Malek Bennabi's approach vis-a-vis his predecessors and contemporaries. Malek is, without doubt, considered among the ‘cultural awakeners’, ‘religious reformists’, ‘history mappers’ and ‘nationalists actors’ with the *Ulema* association as called by McDougall (McDougall, 2006, p. 100) ‘Doctors of the renewed Muslim Algerian *Ummah*’. Malek Bennabi, accordingly, was called ‘the Philosopher of Civilization’ by excellence!

Bennabi’s philosophy demonstrates the singularity, comprehensiveness and profundity of his thought and the success he achieved in diagnosing the phenomenon of "El- Takhalluf" (backwardness) more as "deprivation of civilization"/ “ civilization illness” rather than an exclusive “consequence of colonialism”, “ignorance” or “poverty”. Pursuit to renaissance, renewal and reform and its movements was divided by Malek Bennabi to three main periods: (1) Movement of the first reformists with ‘renewed’ thoughts like Mohammed Abdou and El Afghani; (2) Movement of contemporary reformists asking for a renewed Muslim *Ummah* and (3) Period of the Muslim Brotherhood and Political Islam (McDougall, 2006, p. 102).

Malek Bennabi believes that “the problem of every people, in its essence, is that of civilization”². Civilization that should revolve around a precise formula (Time+Soil +Man). Man should be guided by three orientation(s): (1) Guidance of Action ;(2) Guidance of Culture ;(3) Guidance of Capital (1984, مشكلة الثقافة، (بن نبي). For him, culture is “the environment that frames the individual’s personality and its characteristics...culture is a behavior not a slogan and mere preached words”. Giving an analogy, he identifies culture with the blood in the body of the society, for culture nourishes the society’s civilization, carries the ‘elite’ high cultures as well as the ‘common’ ones. In this part, Bennabi stresses the role of religion in such culture as a prerequisite to the rise of any civilization. Since the elements of civilization consist of man, soil, and time, he explicitly points out that religion (Islam) as the foundation and the all-important catalyst (catalyseur) of these three elements³. In Bennabi’s equation, religion cannot play its civilizing function as a catalyst with the absence of an effective civilizing process that make time, soil and man coherently functional (Benlhacene, 2013, p. 8). Religion, then, is the skeletal frame of any civilization .

¹ Bennabi, M. (2016). *Colonisabilité. Problèmes de la civilisation*. Alger: Benmerabet editions.

² According to Badrane Benlhacene, Associate Professor of civilization studies and philosophy of history, Department of philosophy, Batna University and Department of Islamic Studies, King Faisal University, civilization is governed by internal-external and social-intellectual factors that the equation (Time+Soil+Man) can be generated for civilization itself

(Benlhacene, B. (2013). *The Socio-Intellectual Foundations of Malek Bennabi's Approach to Civilisation*. (A. S.al-Shaikh-Ali, Ed.) *Books-In-Brief Series*).

³ Ibid

Malek Bennabi contends that historical events are simply a reaction to the interaction of the three realms; (1) Realm of Ideas, (2) Realm of Persons, (3) Realm of Objects or Things. The interaction of these three realms is what leads to historical movement (1984, *بن نبي، مشكلة الثقافة*). A society is defined as being developed when a nicely-built nexus is set between these three realms, with a remarkable focus of Bennabi on the realm of ideas. However, when this relationship is shaken or distorted, the ties relating these realms become loose and they all fail to fulfill the collective work effectively. As a result, it leads to failure. The latter is debunked within the coherent harmony of the three realms¹.

In brief, if one looks long and hard enough, he will find that Man is the central force and primary device of any civilizing process, but how and in what ways this Man can lead the *Ummah* (International Muslim Community) to change its backwardness to reform, renewal, renaissance and civilization.

4. Finding the Idea of Change and Philosophy of Renewal in Malek Bennabi's Thoughts

**“Verily, never will Allah change the condition of a people until the change what is in themselves”
(The Quoran al-Ra'd 13:11)²**

4.1. The Idea of Change and Philosophy of Renewal

From the multitude of ideas, visions and perspectives revolving around Marxist socialism, liberal secularism or Islamic reformism, Malek Bennabi with his reformist thoughts based on his famous formula of *Civilization* represent the basic step forward towards the mixture of principles of Islamic with some European thoughts (Bennabi's *Quoranic Phenomenon*, in turn, was considered to be the Algerian best-informed intellectual to get deep and even show an engagement with modern Western Philosophical thought).

Furthermore, Malek Bennabi is seen as a particular intellectual who focuses greatly on ideas related to the post-independence era as stamped by the colonial heritage. He was:

1. The first who wrote about 'backwardness' and insisted on the third road towards development and renaissance away and apart from both Marxism and Capitalism (ideologies);
2. The first and the most prominent intellectual in the Arab-Islamic world who was concerned with cultural thoughts since Ben Khaldoun;
3. Malek Bennabi presented Islam in its potential as the credible source able to retrieve the role of the human being, without the burden of the imperial heritage; Islam, accordingly, should not be viewed just as a holy book or creed, but rather a social reality that contributes greatly in shaping the destiny of human kind. Bennabi believed that Islam and the Prophet Mohammed (SAAS³; Peace and Blessing of God be upon him) changed the basics of social relationships from tribal foundations of an Arab-tribal based society to an Arab-ideas based one combined Islamic culture with different social strata and ethnic varieties (Benlahcene, 2013, p. 4). By doing so, Malek Bennabi considered the prophet Mohammed (SAAS) could replace a tribal—nomadic society to an urban Medinah where he set seeds of his project of change.

¹ Hasbullah Mohamed. Brief Analysis on Bennabi's Theory of Civilization. *A Summary of Malek Bennabi's Thought on Civilization*. Tuesday, June 2, 2009.

<<http://ungss.blogspot.com/2009/06/brief-analysis-on-bennabis-theory-of.html>>

² *The Quo'ran*. (2014). Trans. By Dar Qiraat. Al-Muntada Al-Islami Trust.

³ (SAAS)—“Salla Allahu alayhi wa sallam Peace and Blessing of God be upon him” said by Muslims whenever the name of the Prophet is mentioned.

4. In his book, *Afro-asiatism*, Bennabi introduced the idea of co-colonialism , which equated with neocolonialism. It was a strategic collusion between those considered ‘colonizable’, though ‘decolonized’ and the ex-colonialist or neocolonialist powers and their political alliances (Naylor, 2006, pp. 129-142).

5. Bennabi considered the emerging Third World as an opportunity for religious and moral renewal;

6. Bennabi believed that history and culture are interwoven; he said: “There is no history without culture, for a people which no longer has its culture ,no longer has its history (Naylor, 2006, pp. 129-142)”

7. Malek Bennabi views social change as divided into:

- Change that occurs at the individual level and known either as diffusion, adoption, modernization, cultivation, learning, participation or contact;
- Change in the social system known as innovation, development, segregation and integration;
- Change through cultural/social contact;
- Malek Bennabi refers to the acculturation as one culture absorbs another and that what really happened between the colonizer and colonized cultures/alienation of the colonized as being absorbed by the culture of the colonizer;

4.2.Hardships and Obstacles to Capturing Change and Renewal

To Malek Bennabi, many multidimensional hardships and obstacles are frequently present to obstruct any social change (in Third World Countries) related mainly to what historically inherited.

1. Isolation; The Third World Countries are isolated so that this isolation may be considered as barrier to get new ideas apart from what is considered as a ‘fossilized’ heritage;
2. Customs: old customs are often posing an ‘obstructive’ role to the new challenging customs that may change what is not good towards what is better;
3. Narrow-Mindedness of some ancient generation(s), which is celebrated in an unjustified commitment to old and ‘fossilized’ patterns that keep in them old and sterile ways of thoughts;
4. Veneration of the heritage of the past; this veneration (when over exercised) could contribute in ‘obstructing’ possible change.

As a particular case to be mentioned, Malek Bennabi’s ‘Educational Change and Renewal’ revolve around some “Basics, Elements and Final Aspirations”. Basics/elements embody what Vision to the World any Education should have; its Human Pattern and Paradigm; its System of Knowledge; Its Philosophy / System of Values; Its Philosophy/ System of Aesthetics; Its Philosophy/System of Pragmatics.

The final aspiration, therefore, is to meet a genuine renewal with valid/effective/righteous/dynamic ideas within a valid system without harming or rejecting one’s values and virtues. The role of Education, then, is to correct misconceptions with a continuous/progressive

renewal of effective ideas rather than indoctrinating/heaping up people with dead/deadly and fossilized insights.

With Education, Malek Bennabi was vitally concerned with how to reconstruct Muslim society, revive its cultural heritage and renew its vision towards advance with an effective purge from negative germs inherited from colonialism and its age of backwardness. He urged a call for founding a ‘Sociology of Independence’. The first step to make such change should be through redefining the ‘Muslim Society’ (بن نبي، من اجل التغيير، 2013). He argued that the natural society is static compared to the historical society which is dynamic. He added saying that some characteristics are shared by all types of historical society. Accordingly, social networks required by this new sociology should link members of the society and direct their activities to meet a common function and carry mission of change and vocation of that society.

5. The Muslim Algerian Ulema¹ Association Reform and Malek Bennabi’s Renewal

Though they were convergent towards how evil colonialism was, their intellectual divergences can be safely mentioned while writing about the *Muslim Algerian Ulema* Association and Malek Bennabi. Each tried and strived to strengthen its position to prevail moral incentives amongst and within the Algerian masses against the colonial project. These intellectual divergences or different perspectives to view things had a huge impact on the enrichment of the Algerian anti-colonial intellectual discourse². The latter resulted from a continuous development of a sovereign Algerian intellect, literature and culture that started in their times to look for its own dimensions and horizons.

The authoring movement resulted directly from both Abd El Hamid Ben Badis and Malek Bennabi’s militancy. These Intellectual divergences were peppered with the anti-colonial mission that both sides should carry at that period of time. Both sides were wrongly accused as not fully and directly engaged militarily with the FLN (Front for National Liberation). The Algerian masses were cruelly divided between the different political, religious, literary and intellectual trends since the 1940’s. These divergences, as some critics argued, were evidence of the progressive Algerian multidimensional, anti-colonial awakening and consciousness.

Moreover, these divergences showed how both the Muslim *Ulema* Association and Malek Bennabi sharpened the saw of other Algerian reformists and the Renaissance of the Algerian intellectual entity. True Renaissance, indeed, requires the dust of some intellectual divergences or even intellectual disputes. Total peace within the intellectual scene represents seeds of ideas stagnation and fake courtesy, as some intellectuals believed!

The *Muslim Algerian Ulema* and Malek Bennabi were different mainly vis-à-vis accepting or rejecting the role in politics in fortifying the role of reform. While the association denied being a part of a political party and kept its status of Association, Malek Bennabi confirmed the relationship between politics and reform though he did not engage fully in the political process of the time. Malek Bennabi

¹ Called by James McDougall, in his book *History and Culture of Nationalism in Algeria*, Learned-Man-in-Faith

² Malek Bennabi mentioned his differences with the *Algerian Ulema Association*, mainly in his *Diary of a Landmark of the Century*.

said: “The reform movement had to rise above the mud of politics and the greed of elections¹” (Musqawi, 2013, p. 958). Sheick Mohamed Bashir El Ibrahimi answered him saying: “The injustice towards the Association was justified; the Association was aware of the fact of imposing a battle on the Algerian people at a stage where self-conditions for the battle were not fulfilled, but rather there was something in it that might mean suicide. However, the work of the Association emphasized on colonialism misses the opportunity by feinting it to reveal its methods”²

Indeed, both the *Muslim Algerian Ulema* and Malek Bennabi were committed-less to a political party or famous figure, but to Islam. Their intellectual commitment pursued a final aspiration to reform, renew and promote a renaissance to found pillars of a genuine civilization. As *Ulema* were inspired by the reformist movements of the Arab orient, Malek Bennabi was highly influenced by his Seikh Abdelmadjid in madrasa (school) who instilled in him values of the emerging *Nahda* (Renaissance), which instilled in him that Islam and modernity were compatible.

Malek Bennabi learned and promoted that Islam was a vehicle not only for political but also social, cultural and intellectual liberation. Malek Bennabi with the Muslim Algerian *Ulema* were politically aware rather than aligned that Islam should be considered a ‘central preoccupation. (Naylor, 2006, pp. 129-142).

Colonialism as a ‘fetish’ and the ‘civilizing mission’ as an ‘idol’ were both targets to be ‘destroyed’ by Sheick Ben Badis, Sheick Beshir El Ibrahimi and Malek Bennabi’. It was considered by them as a felony and devil. Both trends shared anti-colonial sentiments with different visions and how both claimed deconstructing the ‘stones’ and ‘idols’ of ‘*Maraboutism*’, ‘*Torokia*’ and some *Zawiyas*³ in the case of Ben Badis and of colonialism, fossilized, dead and deadly ideas and misconception in the case of Bennabi.

Both the *Muslim Algerian Ulema* and Malek Bennabi stressed the idea that decadence of the Muslim world was self-inflicted with what Malek Bennabi called colonizability and what the *Muslim Algerian Ulema* named inward colonization. Sheick Ben Badis said once: “To be materially and formally free but inwardly and mentally enslaved is far worse than being outwardly constrained but inwardly free; and true freedom lies in submission on the one that is the source of absolute inward (mental and cultural) and outward (formal and political) freedom” (McDougall, 2006, p. 100); Sheick El Ibrahim added: ““The liberation of minds is the basis for the liberation of bodies and it is impossible for a body to be set free, carrying a slave mind”. Malek Bennabi said as well that: “colonizability was not only imposed by “exterior” power, but also by the “colonizables” torpid “interior” (Naylor, 2006, pp. 129-142).

In turn, the Algerian cultural heritage was viewed differently by both Sheick Ben Badis and Sheick El Ibrahimi who viewed it from a ‘religious’ perspective to claim ‘land, name and difference’ that should be ideally resulted from reforming Islam after purifying it from deviation and metaphysical misconceptions and fallacies. Malek Bennabi vision started from his ‘civilization project’ based on the equation of (Time, Man and Soil) and the three realms of (Ideas, people and objects). These realms should be ideally oriented by the (capital, the ethics and pragmatics) with a more focus on the appropriate Man

¹ Bennabi called those politicians who stole the Algerian revolution from people’s sacrifices with resonant preaching and speeches : les voleurs de prestige (‘demagogues’ and ‘thieves of prestige’)

² Mohamed Bachir El Ibrahimi : *Effects of Bachir El Ibrahimi*, Dar El Gerb El Islami. Algeria: Algeria, 1997.p.450.

³ اعتبرت بعض الزوايا الطرقية و الزوايا الإحتلال قضاء و قدر considered colonialism as a destiny to be accepted

and its realm to manage its ideas and affairs of its civilization project. The *Muslim Ulema*, as well, stressed the significance of a society construction with Man as its fuel. They built many schools and manage to consider Man as device to any decolonizing movement or reform.

As Sheick Ben Badis founded the *Muslim Ulema* and was influential to a very far extent in re-shaping the Algerian religious scene from 1920's to the 1940's, mainly through their newspapers *Meteor* and *Clairvoyance*¹. Malek Bennabi was influential in the creation of the *Al Qiyam*, the first Algerian Islamist organization, and he conducted seminars in his house in Algiers. He influenced many authors and thinkers in Algeria and the Islam World (He greatly influenced the Tunisian Islamist Ghannouchi; one of the Islamist leaders in Tunisia and Nouredine Boukrouh in Algeria; He inspired also great leaders of Malaysia and Indonesia).

In brief, what associate Malek Bennabi with the *Muslim Ulema* was more present and apparent than what disassociate them. Both defended the Algerian identity and both devoted their intellects to the Algerian cause unreservedly though they were not engaged militarily. Both considered pariah by the French colonizer. Indeed, the blessing of their divergences or differences did not ruin the nice ties between the Constantine-native intellectuals; their relation never turned to curse, hostility and confrontation.

6. CONCLUSION

This paper endorses the fact that Malek Bennabi with his vision of renewal and his equation to civilization (Time + Man +Soil) planned for a credible future vision. In addition to the realms of (things, ideas, people) oriented by "ethics, pragmatics, techniques and logic", he clarified to a very far extent the backwardness of the Man (ex-colonized) after being independent. The key concept, in this context, is that this Man (ex-colonized) is liberated as his land was decolonized, but not totally free as cultural barriers and shackles of the ex-colonizer are still in this man's mind, soul and spirit. Other findings affirm as well that many other challenges prevented civilizations advance, among them 'El-Tekdis' (heaping up). The latter must be ended up with a philosophy of renewal and change departed from a groundbreaking reform.

Change, Malek Bennabi believes inspired from his Motto, the Quoranic verse: "Verily, never will Allah change the condition of a people until the change what is in themselves" (*The Quoran* al-Ra'd 13:11). This verse shows clearly that change comes from within. Malek Bennabi keeps saying that initiating a civilizing process must go with a change of the human's status from his passive- natural-raw state to a productive individual.

Furthermore, the essence of civilization with its equation and its guidance(s) of capital, action and culture and the soul of all Malek Bennabi's thoughts revolve around the renewed-liberated-effective 'Man' and how he deals, mainly but not exclusively with the realm of ideas with a renewed action far from heaping up; effectiveness of religion guidance and sovereign productivity (not imitation) of the methodological well-planned/well-structured work as well as the true societal, ethical, artistic, pragmatic guidance. By the end, we conclude that Man of Civilization in Malek Bennabi's equation should move beyond being a dead cell in the society with passive heaping up and blind imitation to a 'Man' who thinks and produces with ethical, aesthetical, logical and artistic orientation(s) and therefore this 'Man' is always on an ongoing process of change, renewal and freedom.

¹ الشهاب و البصائر باللغة العربية (Meteor and Clairvoyance)

All translations from French or Arabic are of the researcher

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