

**The Pattern of Cycle of Civilization:  
Resemblance between Ibn Khaldūn and Malik Bennabi's Views**

**Corak Kitaran Ketamadunan  
Persamaan di Antara pendapat Ibn Khaldūn dan Malik  
Bennabi**

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**Abstract**

There is very much resemblance between Ibn Khaldūn and Malik Bennabi's views on the concept of the cycle of civilization. It is evident that the two thinkers maintain that civilization in its rise and fall follows the cyclical pattern whereby a civilization commences its course in history, develops and reaches its peak and then retrogresses and declines leaving space for another civilization to commence its course. This is the pattern that governs civilization in history. The article argues that it was Ibn Khaldūn, within the Islamic circles of thought, who first introduced the concept of the cycle of civilization and applied it to his own time revealing that "State", as a unit of analysis, follows in its course a cycle that consists of several stages from its inception to decline and later to transition to other places. Later in the history of Islam, it was Malik Bennabi who took the intellectual burden of expanding Ibn Khaldūn's model of the cycle. He further developed Ibn Khaldūn's view and introduced his own approach to the study of the pattern of the cycle of civilization showing various phases of the development of civilization. This article focuses more on the view of Bennabi as he is a contemporary thinker whose ideas are much more relevant to our present state of affairs.

**Keywords:** Ibn Khaldūn, Malik Bennabi, Cycle of civilization, Rise, Fall.

**Abstrak**

Terdapat banyak persamaan di Antara pandangan Ibn Khaldūn dan Malik Bennabi terhadap konsep kitaran ketamadunan. Ia adalah jelas bahawa kedua-duanya

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berpendapat bahawa tamadun dalam kebangkitannya dan kejatuhannya mengikut corak kitaran di mana tamadun bermula jalannya dalam sejarah, membangun dan mencapai kemuncaknya dan mula mundur dan memberi ruang untuk tamadun lain untuk memulakan jalannya. Ini adalah corak yang menguasai ketamadunan dalam sejarah. Artikel-artikel menegaskan bahawa dalam bulatan pemikiran Islam, Ibn Khaldūn yang pertama kali memperkenalkan konsep kitaran ketamadunan dan ia digunakan pada zamannya sendiri dan mendedahkan bahawa "Negeri", sebagai unit analisis, mengikuti kursus kitaran yang terdiri daripada beberapa peringkat dari penubuhannya hingga ke kemerosotan dan kemudian beralih ke tempat lain. Kemudian dalam sejarah Islam, Malik Bennabi mengambil beban intelektual bagi mengembangkan model kitaran Ibn Khaldūn. Dia memajukan pandangan Ibn Khaldūn dan memperkenalkan kaedah beliau sendiri untuk mengkaji corak kitaran ketamadunan yang menunjukkan pelbagai fasa pembangunan ketamadunan. Artikel ini lebih memberi tumpuan pada pandangan Bennabi kerana beliau adalah seorang ahli pemikir kontemporari dan ideanya lebih relevan dengan keadaan zaman sekarang.

**Kata Kunci:** Ibn Khaldūn, Malik Bennabi, Corak Kitaran Ketamadunan, Kebangkitannya, Kejatuhannya.

### Introduction

Civilization by its very nature is a complex human phenomenon entailing many dimensions such as socio-economic, psych-social, religio-cultural, techno-industrial, intellectual-scientific, educational, military...etc. The study of this human phenomenon becomes of more merit and interest to many world thinkers and scholars. Hence, many approaches and methods have been developed based on the school of thought as well as the worldview adopted by the respective scholars. From an Islamic perspective the phenomenon of civilization has been a subject matter of study ever since the early days of the development of Islamic society. Undoubtedly, the Qur'ān is an unprecedented book as far as the study of the rise and fall of previous nations and people is concerned. One of the most important subjects that found it extensive reference in the Qur'ān is the patterns which govern the life of societies and nations. This article, inter alia, demonstrates the views of two Muslim scholars, Ibn Khaldūn and Malik Bennabi on the pattern which govern the rise and fall of civilization. Both scholars adopted the concept of the cycle to study the patterns regulating the phenomenon of rise and fall.

Ibn Khaldūn used the concept of the cycle of State while Bennabi used the concept of the cycle of civilization.

Ibn Khaldūn has been rightly portrayed, in the Islamic circles of thought, as the father and initiator of the theory of rise and fall of civilization in the scientific sense of the term. His seminal work “*The Muqaddimah*” stands tall as the first Islamic theorization of the phenomenon of civilization paving the way for a systematic analysis of the various aspects of civilization. The work of Ibn Khaldūn appears to be one of the pioneering civilizational analysis models in which a factorial and multi-dimensional approach has been deployed to provide an in-depth interpretation of the phenomenon of civilization. Indeed, it was Ibn Khaldūn who first analyzed the movement of civilization and theorized its patterns in a more scientific way. He was the first to observe and theorize the pattern of the cycle of State from a more coherent and systematic approach to civilizational analysis.

As for the second thinker, Malik Bennabi, civilizational approach is the backbone of all his works without which all his works fall apart. As a contemporary Muslim thinker, Bennabi, too may be considered as a model builder as far as civilizational analysis of societies is concerned. He was among the few in the Islamic world to indulge in developing a coherent approach to the study of the phenomenon of civilization benefiting from the exciting models of human and social sciences during his time as well as the works of Ibn Khaldūn who preceded him by centuries.

As far as the concept of the cycle of civilization is concerned one can claim safely that both scholars attach a great weightage to the concept of the cycle. Most of the works of Malik Bennabi on civilizational analysis revolve around the concept of the cyclical movement of civilization. Almost in every book which he wrote or in every idea which he discussed there was an implicit or explicit reference to this concept. Whatever the names<sup>1</sup> Bennabi used, the truth of the matter is that human civilization in its march follows a defined pattern. Bennabi argues that

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<sup>1</sup>He used to call it: the cyclical phenomenon, the pattern of civilization, cycle of civilization and the phenomenon of civilization.

“in a pre-civilized society, there comes a living idea which gives the society an initial drive or push which makes it enter history.”<sup>2</sup> Thus, this society will undertake its course in history following a cyclical pattern. To attain an understanding of the cycle of civilization, one should examine how Bennabi developed this concept and how he redefined it to fit his new system and method of analysis.

### **Ibn Khaldūn: The Muslim Mind behind the Concept of the Cycle of Civilization**

Ibn Khaldūn was the Muslim mind behind the use of the concept of the cycle of civilization as the pattern which governs the rise and fall of societies. It is interesting enough to mention that Malik Bennabi himself, in his study of the rise and fall of civilization, who noted that Ibn Khaldūn was the first Muslim scholars who introduced the concept of the cycle and later on used it to study the case of the development of Islamic civilization. Bennabi says:

*“It was Ibn Khaldūn who, inspired probably by Islamic psychological factors, disentangled the notion of cycle in his theory of the (Three generations), wherein the terminology, somewhat summarized, masked the profoundness of his ideas by reducing the dimensions of a civilization to the scale of the dynasty even is narrow, this conception invites us to emphasize the transitory aspect of civilization.”<sup>3</sup>*

An important version of this idea is to be found in the writings of some other scholars who studied Ibn Khaldūn. For instance, Gibb has aptly remarked that “the originality of Ibn Khaldūn’s work is to be found in his detailed and objective analysis of the political, social and economic factors underlying the establishment of political units and evolution of

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<sup>2</sup>‘Ammār Ṭalbī, The implication of Malik Bennabi’s View On Contemporary Muslim Society, A paper presented at International Seminar On Malik Bennabi, organized by Institute of Advanced Studies (IPT), (Malaysia: University Malaya: Berita Publishing, 1991), p. 1.

<sup>3</sup>Malik Bennabi, *Islam in History and Society*,<sub>2</sub> Trans. Asmā Rashīd, (Kuala Lumpur: Brita Publishing, 1991) p. 8.

the state.”<sup>4</sup> This evolution of the State represents what Bennabi called in the above passage the cycle of civilization. Referring back to Ibn Khaldūn's work “the *Muqaddimah*, one can see clearly the articulation of the concept of the cycle in the study of the rise and fall of Islamic society. According to him, the usual evolution of the State is manifested in terms of three generations and five stages. By his account, the development of the “State” or “Dynasty” is similar to that of the individual, has a natural life span, which is generally no more than three generations or about 120 years. The first generation includes those who swept over the land in conquest; once settled in the cities, they enjoy the strength and solidarity of their desert existence. The effects of sedentary living begin to appear influencing the lives of people and changing the cultures of the societies. Ibn Khaldūn describes the features and personality of this generation in the following revealing passage:

*“The first generation retains the desert qualities, desert toughness, and desert savagery. Its members are used to privacy and to sharing their glory with each other; they are brave and rapacious. Therefore, the strength of group feeling continues to be preserved among them. They are sharp and greatly feared people. People submit to them.”*<sup>5</sup>

However, in the second generation, luxury and royal authority replaced rigorous living and solidarity. Ibn Khaldūn argues that “under the influence of royal authority and life of ease, the second-generation changes from the desert attitude to sedentary culture, from privation to luxury and plenty”<sup>6</sup> In line with this, usually the second generation will make some efforts to regain back the state of balance, but by the third generation the qualities of desert life have been forgotten.<sup>7</sup> Put different-

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<sup>4</sup>Hamilton, A.R. Gibb, *Studies On The Civilization of Islam*, (New Jersey: Princeton, 1982), p. 176.

<sup>5</sup>Abd al-Raḥmān bin Muḥammad Ibn Khaldūn, *The Muqaddimah: An Introduction to History*, Trans. Franz Rosenthal, Vol.1, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), p. 344.

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 345.

ly, “by this point, sedentary living has taken its toll; the empire has become (senile and is worn out,) and the fourth generation faces destruction.”<sup>8</sup>

In a different similar manner, Ibn Khaldūn wants to expand his own view of the cycle of civilization stressing, this time, on the various stages that the State or Dynasty has to undergo in its course of civilizational development from the rise to the fall. Ibn Khaldūn introduced<sup>9</sup> the same concept of the cycle in a slightly different context where he argues that the evolution of the State passes through five stages. The first is that of success; and the nomads overthrow their enemies and establish a new State. The second stage is the one in which the ruler gains complete control over his people as well as over his territories and thus insures the unity and consolidation. In the third stage the State achieves a stable level of progress and tranquility. In the fourth stage, the State reaches the peak of its social, institutional and cultural organization. However, this stage starts witnessing certain kind of inertia and inclining towards preserving what is already achieved without any new attempts of invention or expansion. In the fifth stage the society faces the state of disintegration and corruption in its structure and function.<sup>10</sup>

It seems Bennabi benefited from Ibn Khaldūn’s view in developing his notion of the cycle. An observer has mentioned that “there is a clear resemblance between his view on the social development and those of Ibn Khaldūn. However, Bennabi, was not only a careful student of Ibn Khaldūn, but also an intelligent beneficiary of more recent advancement in the modern social sciences.”<sup>11</sup> Therefore, he was capable of fathoming the general pattern which governs the march of civilization. Both of them had emphasized the transitory aspect of the values of State or civilization as well as the importance of the changes occurring in the human person-

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<sup>8</sup>Roberet, H. Lauer, *Perspectives on Social Change*, 4 Sub-Edition (USA: Allyn & Bacon, 1991), p. 39.

<sup>9</sup>Al-Jafa iri, *The Problem of Civilization*, p. 166.

<sup>10</sup>Ibn Khaldūn, *The Muqaddimah*, Op. cit., p. 355.

<sup>11</sup>Fawzia Bariun, *Malik Bennabi: His life and Theory of Civilization*, (USA: University of Michigan, 1988), p. 115.

ality and culture during the process of evolution or rise and fall of civilization. The latter, suggests that the human civilization should start from a given point and follow a determined pattern, which finally leads to its end and transition of civilization to another place.

### Malik Bennabi: Transformer of Ibn Khaldūn's Notion of the Cycle into a Tool of Analysis of the Rise and Fall of Civilization

Bennabi asserted that history has a cyclic movement<sup>12</sup> and sequence. It sometimes records the glittering aspects for the nation and in other instances; it records the worse states of degeneration and decline. This simple social remark is very important in addressing the social problems. It assists in determining the real position of the society in the cycle of civilization. Thus, when we know our position, we can find out the causes of the decline and also the existing capacities of progress.<sup>13</sup> Bennabi described his view of the cycle of civilization in the following passage:

*“Civilization presents itself as a numerical series following its course in similar but not-identical terms. Thus appears an essential notion of history: the cycle of civilization. Each cycle is defined by certain psycho-temporal conditions proper to a social group: it is a civilization in these conditions. Then the civilization migrates, shifts its abode, and transfers its values in another area. It thus perpetuates itself in an indefinite exodus through successive metamorphoses: each metamorphosis being a particular synthesis of man, soil and time.”<sup>14</sup>*

It is clear in the body of the above passage that the concept of psycho-temporal conditions of each civilization as well as its migration, transfer and shift from one place to another implies the existence of the notion of the cycle. In fact, in these conditions lie the living identity and

<sup>12</sup>Sulayman al-Khatib, *Philosophy of Civilization According to Malik Bennabi: Islamic Study in Light of Contemporary Reality*, (Bayrut: IIIT & al-Mu'assasat al-Jami'yya li al-Dirasat wa al-Nashr, 1993), p. 93.

<sup>13</sup>Malik Bennabi, *Shurut al-Nahda*, (Dimashq: Dar al-Fikr, 1981), p. 47.

<sup>14</sup>*Islam in History and Society*, Trans. Asma Rachid, (Malaysia: Berita Studies in Contemporary Thought, 1993), pp. 7-8.

characteristics of each civilization which distinguishes it from other civilizations. Accordingly, if civilizations are differing in their identities and characters, one must underline their diversity and integrality.

Thus, one can consider this diversity as one of the ways through which the notion of the cycle appears. That is to say, if human civilizations are not identical and selfsame, then one should admit the fact that there is no civilization, which can last forever on the one hand, and there is no civilization that could dominate over all civilizations on the other. Therefore, the notion of the cycle suggests that each human civilization will rise, expand, develop, reach the peak and commence the course of its decline paving the way for another civilization. In this respect, every civilization plays its role in history and once it reaches the state of decline, it stops from developing and another civilization shall formulate its cycle in history in another place. It is this transitory aspect of civilizations, which justifies in history the cyclical movement of a civilization.<sup>15</sup>

How does this transitory process occur in the social context? Responding to this question, Bennabi debates that every human civilization passes through three important phases in its evolution: the spiritual phase, the rational phase, and the instinctive phase. Once the civilization reaches the third phase, the transitory process commences shifting the values and seeds of civilization to another place in the world. This process marks the movement of civilization and its transfer from one nation to another and from one empire to another. Thus, a new synthesis of man, soil and time emerges in history to initiate the advent of birth of a new civilization with different characteristics and distinct psychosocial context.

According to Bennabi, the starting point in the cycle represents the point of separation between two different positions, the pre-civilized position and the civilized position. A religious idea or a moral principle emerges at this juncture. A driving spiritual<sup>16</sup> force pushes the society towards the civilized phase and drives it to construct the historical context that will synthesize the three factors: Man, soil and time. It is this

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<sup>15</sup>Al-Jafa iri, *The Problems of Civilization*, Op. cit., p. 140.

<sup>16</sup>Al-Jafa iri, *The Problems of Civilization*, p. 176.



“synthesis that coincides with the birth of a civilization as it concurs, with the starting of its historical action.”<sup>17</sup> In other words, at the beginning of every civilization a religious idea or a moral principle<sup>18</sup> breathes the spiritual seeds that generate a movement of civilization. Hence, the spiritual phase commences and dominates over the life of the individual and the society as well. Therefore, all activities<sup>19</sup> and actions of the individual are under the total orientation of soul and its driving force. Any modification or change in life of the society is indebted to the spiritual forces that emerged with the religious idea in its broad sense. However, this spiritual phase cannot last eternally. It rather starts decreasing on parallel with the evolution of the society and the rise of the material problems as well as the expansion of civilization. Thus, once a society reaches certain limits the spiritual forces start losing their total control over the activities of reason and instinct.

Therefore, in order for a civilization to cope with this change, it shifts to the second phase, that is, the rational phase. Bennabi argues that in this phase most of the activities fall under the control of reason. Thus, the civilization keeps its evolution in the course of history, but the rational phase does not last forever. Therefore, when the rational forces start losing their control over the activities of the individual, the civilization faces a new context in which the instinctive forces begin dominating over the spiritual and rational one. In order for a civilization to respond to the status quo, it inflects and turns to the third phase, that is, the instinctive phase.<sup>20</sup> In the context of this phase, most of the activities of the individual and the society are under the control of the instincts. Accordingly, the civilization impels into the post-civilized stage and thus its values transit to another place where a new synthesis of man, soil and time would

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<sup>17</sup>Malik Bennabi, *Milād Mujtama': Shabakatu al-'ilāqāt al-Ijtimā' iyyah*, Trans. Abd al-Sabūr Shāhīn, (Dimashq: Dar al-Fikr, 1985), p. 51.

<sup>18</sup>Ali Al-Qurayshī, *Al-Ṭaghayīr al-Ijtimā'ī 'inda Malik Bennabi* (Al-Qāhirah: al-Zahrā' li al-'ilāmi al-'Arabī, 1989), p. 110.

<sup>19</sup>Al-Khatīb, *Philosophy of Civilization*, Op. cit., p. 94.

<sup>20</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 97.

commence. Bennabi describes these phases in the following revealing passage:

*“The three phases of this cycle<sup>21</sup> are representative of three stages which a civilization undergoes in the process of its evolution. The complete stage in which all the human qualities and talents are subject to the control of the spirit (faith or soul), thus being guided by the considerations which are of metaphysical nature. The second stage where all qualities and talents of the individual are particularly under the control of reason, thus being oriented toward tackling the practical problems of life. The third and last stage represents the complete disintegration of those qualities and talents when they become, under the dominance of the instinct, freed from the tutorship of both spirit and reason. At this stage, no common activity is by any means possible, for it is chaos and anarchy that actually prevail.”<sup>22</sup>*

This is the pattern of the march<sup>23</sup> of every civilization in its evolution. Indeed, human civilizations are but series of interrelated cycles similar in their phases to that of the Islamic and Christian civilizations. The first phase commences when a religious idea emerges and it ends once the instinctive forces dominate over the spiritual and rational ones. Almost all-historical societies are subjected to this pattern. Bennabi ascertains, that “the historical experience assures these phases of the evolution of civilizations and almost no civilization is an exception to this pattern.”<sup>24</sup> Elaborating the above idea further, he debates that “a cycle born in certain psycho-temporal conditions develops therefrom, and when the human civilization has outstripped them, it is the end of a cycle. Another commences in new conditions that would, in their turn, be by passed. It is this law that traces across the millennium of history, this path mounting in gentle ascent that humanity slowly scales”<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>21</sup>For further details in the concept of the three phases see: Bariun, *Malik Bennabi*, Op. cit., pp. 116-117.

<sup>22</sup>Bennabi, *Milād*, Op. cit., p. 37.

<sup>23</sup>Zaki, Aḥmad. *Malik Bennabi and The Problems of Civilizations: A Critical and Analytical Study*, First. Ed. (Beirut: Dār al-Ṣafwah, 1992), p. 80.

<sup>24</sup>Bennabi, *Shurūt*, Op. cit., p. 54.

<sup>25</sup>Bennabi, *Islam in History and Society*, Op. cit., pp. 177-178.

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

### **Ibn Khaldūn and Malik Bennabi's Views on the Psycho-social Dimension of the Cycle of Civilization**

Ibn Khaldūn was the pioneer in introducing the notion of the cycle indicating the transitory nature of civilization and transfer of civilizational might and values from one State to another and from one Dynasty to another. At this juncture, it is important to mention that both scholars did not see in the cyclical movement of civilization a mere transition and movement from one place to another but both think that there are major changes happening in the mind, personality, culture and the entire social fabric of the individual and society during the process of the transition from one stage or phase to another.

Ibn Khaldūn has provided us with an important idea on the above matter paving the way for a better understanding of the phenomenon of the cycle of civilization. He states:

*“It should be known that a dynasty (State) goes through different stages and encounters new conditions. Through the conditions that are peculiar to a particular stage, the supporters of the dynasty acquire in that stage traits of character which do not exist in any other stage. Traits of character are natural results of the peculiar situation in which they are found.”<sup>26</sup>*

In this pivotal passage, we can note the significance of the changes, which occur, and the attributes that are acquired by the people in every phase of their development. Bennabi seems to be more aware of this fact

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<sup>26</sup>Ibn Khaldūn, *The Muqaddimah*, Op. cit., p. 353.

that the three phases of the cycle are not a mere evolution and shift from one situation to another or from one phase to another. Rather, they reflect deep and essential modifications in human personality as well as in the social relations of the society. According to him, the majority of these changes are the result of the function of the religious idea in history. To attain an understanding of the function of religion in the psycho-social context, we should examine the change that occurs in the psychology of man and in the social context of the society when a religious idea starts its function in history.

Bennabi invites us to use the psycho-social analysis to examine the various changes happening to the individual and society during the transition from one stage to another. He examines how the religious idea conditions the individual and society to undertake a course of civilization. According to him, the religious idea formulates two important instruments of the civilizing process: (1) the social relations network which represents the new realm of persons; and (2) the quality and nature of the psychological reflections toward the new principles and teachings of religion. The latter, is called the system of the conditioned reflexes. In other words, before the construction of the social relations in the society, it should be first formulated within the human soul. Therefore, when we discuss the concept of social relations we should relate it to the system of conditioned reflexes.<sup>27</sup>

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

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

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<sup>27</sup>Bennabi, *Millād*, Op. cit., p. 71.

This is the real state of the social relations at the spiritual stage where every activity of the individual or society is under the control of faith and soul.<sup>28</sup> On the other hand, one can explain the spiritual phase in psychological terms by saying that it corresponds to the state in which the individual is in his best conditions. That is to say, "the conditioned reflexes system of the individual reaches its utmost efficacy with his vital energy being in its optimum level of organization and orientation."<sup>29</sup> Indeed, it is religion that subjugates the vital energy of man to the conditioning process. An observer has explained Bennabi's view by saying: "When human beings are in their natural stage *fitrah*, Bennabi theorizes, they are guided mainly by their natural instinct. Yet, when a spiritual idea or religion appears, it subjugates and suppresses their instinct to a conditional process. This does not mean that the instinct will be terminated but rather that they will be disciplined into a relationship functional to the religion. Individuals in this situation are partially freed from the natural state while their spiritual potency controls their lives."<sup>30</sup> In other words, the individual and society in this phase enjoys a dynamic civilizing power, which condemns any spirit of slackness and apathy. Bennabi explained the idea in a slightly different way when he discussed the nature of the individual at point zero of the diagram of the march of civilization. He debates that it represents the state to which some Muslim scholars attribute the word "*Fitrah*", i.e. he is fully equipped with all his inborn instinct thus being in the state of the man of nature. The role of the religious idea will be manifested in submitting those instincts to a process of conditioning and adaptation, which represents what is known in Freudian psychology as (repression). Bennabi says:

*"Yet, it is not of the nature of this process to eradicate those instincts but it rather regularizes them in an integral functional relationship with the imperatives of the religious ideal. Thus, the vital energy represented by the instincts is not abolished. Rather, it is subjugated to the rules of a specific order. At this phase, the individual is partly liberated*

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<sup>28</sup>Al-Qurayshī, *Al-Taghyīr*, Op. cit., p. 110.

<sup>29</sup>Bennabi, *Milād*, Op. cit., pp. 70-71.

<sup>30</sup>Bariun, *Malik Bennabi*, Op. cit., p. 116.

*from the natural laws which govern his biological structure such that being is almost totally under the control of the spiritual considerations and forces generated within his (inner) by the religious ideal so that he leads a new life based on the laws of the soul.*"<sup>31</sup>

However, with the shift of civilization to the rational phase<sup>32</sup> the society enjoys a mature and developed relations network which attains its full expansion but, nevertheless, suffers from some defects which commence appearing on the surface of its structure and organization. In other words, the social relations network starts suffering from certain hidden maladies. Thus the society continues its development but not without bearing these internal diseases in its body. In psychological terms, this means that the individual no longer exerts full control over his vital energy in the course of undertaking his social function. Thus, a part of his activities and civilizing capacities are no more subject to his conditioned reflexes mechanism. That is to say, faith starts losing its full control over the instincts and energies of the individual.<sup>33</sup>

In spite of all these changes, the society like the individual still follows its course of evolution and development. This is due in its major part to the force of faith breathed into the society in the spiritual phase. In this regard, Bennabi argues that the progress in this phase owes its continuity to the driving force of the thrust of faith generated in the previous phase.<sup>34</sup> However, in this phase one should underline the fact that not all the civilizing forces of the individual and society are functioning properly. Rather, part of the society's forces and energies has fallen into a state of apathy whereas another one has gone into the abyss and decline. In other words, the individual continues losing catch<sup>35</sup> with his ideals on the one hand and deviating from his original path on the other. As a result of the society's expansion and as its web of relations approaches perfection, new material problems and new exigencies arise. Bennabi argues that in order for a civilization to cope with the arising new problems and exi-

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<sup>31</sup>Bennabi, *Mllād*, Op. cit., p. 101.

<sup>32</sup>Al-Qurayshī, *Al-Taghyīr*, Op. cit., p. 111.

<sup>33</sup>Bennabi, *Mllād*, Op. cit., pp. 101- 102

<sup>34</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 71.

<sup>35</sup>Al-Khatib, *Philosophy of Civilization*, Op. cit., p. 96.

gencies as well as with the emergence of new standards of life, it follows a new turning that coincides with the renaissance in the case of the European cycle, and with the advent of the Umayyah dynasty and breakdown of the righteous Caliphate in the case of the Islamic cycle. In both cycles, the new turning was that of reason, because in contrast to the order of the (soul), the order of reason does not exert total control over the natural instincts, the latter, therefore, is gradually emancipated inasmuch as the power of the (soul) weakens as was the situation during the Umayyah period when the society ceased to exert its pressure over the individual.<sup>36</sup>

It is only natural then that the instincts reach full emancipation as a culmination of the gradual weakening of the powers of the soul. As history carries on its movement, the process of evolution of civilization manifests its impacts on the psychology of the individual as well as on the moral edifice<sup>37</sup> of the society that ceases, at a given stage, to adjust the behavior of the individual. The more the instinctive energies become emancipated, the less the individual's action becomes subjected to the moral considerations. Bennabi further argues:

*"If one was able to measure, by means of an accurate device, these psychological conditions so as to discern their implications as one would do in the laboratories of natural sciences, then it would have been possible to notice the creeping decadence affecting the moral standards of the society. In clearer terms, one would have witnessed that, as soon as the society enters the phase of reason, the social efficacy of the religious idea starts decreasing at a mounting rate."*<sup>38</sup>

In the third phase, the natural instinct of the individual is no longer under the control of the religious idea and society as well. Therefore, "they are no more integrated in a harmonious whole. Instead, they work individually in pursuit of selfish interests as the conditioning order of the vital energy lose its social function and are no more subject to conditioned reflexes mechanism which is entitled to promote the process of

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<sup>36</sup>Bennabi, *Shurūt*, Op. cit., pp. 68-69.

<sup>37</sup>Al-Qurayshī, *Al-Taghyīr*, Op. cit., p. 117.

<sup>38</sup>Bennabi, *Milād*, Op. cit., p. 102.

adaptation and orientation<sup>39</sup> of that energy.”<sup>40</sup> Consequently, it is individualism that prevails as a result of the instincts’ emancipation and then the social relations network is totally dissolved. According to him, this is the age of decline and decadence, which reflects disintegration of the relations network and the conditioned reflexes system of its archetype.<sup>41</sup> Accordingly, he described the psychological and sociological evolution of civilization in the third phase by saying:

*“Hence, the instinct still reined in by the religious ideal carry on their emancipation struggle and gradually gains back their dominance over both the individual and society. Once the instincts are completely emancipated, man’s destiny becomes at their mercy and, consequently, a new phase of civilization, i.e. the third<sup>42</sup> phase, begins. The religious ideal then ceases to fulfill its social function and society finally plunges into the state of decline and disintegration thus denoting the end of a cycle of civilization. This complete cycle sheds enough light upon the phases, which the vital energy undergoes especially the first phase where this vital energy is totally submitted to the order of the religious ideal. It also demonstrates the conditions under which the process of organization and orientation of that energy is carried out under the guidance of the religious ideal.”<sup>43</sup>*

Once a society reaches its third phase, that is, decadence and degeneration, it starts the sequence of the end of its cycle and then the values of civilization move toward another place, where another cycle commences on a new bio-historical synthesis opening way to another nation or empire to commence its civilization. This was, indeed, the case of the European civilization when the Islamic civilization fell into decline. Eventually, in the abandoned place of civilization life retrogresses and becomes backward compared to the stage of civilization. To mention one area that will be affected by the decline of civilization is work of sciences which, generally, responds positively or negatively to the state of civilization or decline. Indeed, this was the case of the Islamic civilization af-

<sup>39</sup> Al-Jafa iri, *The Problems of Civilization*, Op. cit., p. 186.

<sup>40</sup> Bennabi, *Milād*, Op. cit., p. 71.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 70-71,72.

<sup>42</sup> Al-Qurayshī, *Al-Taghyr*, Op. cit., p. 113.

<sup>43</sup> Bennabi, *Milād*, Op. cit., pp. 101-102, 103-104



ter its decline where sciences lost its significance and no longer able to nurture innovation and creativity. Bennabi debates that wherever, “there ceases the radiation of the soul, the rational work also comes to stop. One would say that the thirst to understand and the will to act, the moment he loses the faith, the tension of faith. Reason disappears because its work perishes in a milieu that could no longer understand or utilize it.”<sup>44</sup>

Bariun claims: “According to Bennabi, reason will have lost its social function as human beings lose the tension of the faith. Society will then enter the darkness of history, as the cycle of civilization ends.”<sup>45</sup> It may lead to the misunderstanding of Bennabi's view in this regard. Bariun argues that this situation of corruption is inevitable, thus, this judgment may put Bennabi in the circle of the determinist scholars. On the contrary, as we have analyzed earlier Bennabi believed in the cyclical movement of a civilization, however, he was very aware of the fact that human will is a dynamic factor in the march of civilization. A few revealing passages may serve as evidence for his opinion. He argues that the historical determinism does work the way many understand it. In other words, as far as God grants man's will and freedom, the historical determinism<sup>46</sup> becomes under the command and control of man himself.<sup>47</sup> Furthermore, he argues that so long as man is in the state of accepting willingly the instructions and directions of the soul and reason that leads to a civilization and its development, these psychological factors and capacities are saved in his consciousness.<sup>48</sup> Hence, the course of civilization can be turned around once man directed his will towards renewal and puts the necessary efforts to achieve it.

It is obvious from the above analysis that man can direct his steps towards integration or disintegration. There is no total determinism in the historical movement as history itself is formulated by man himself. To

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<sup>44</sup>Bennabi, *Islam in History and Society*, Op. cit., p. 31.

<sup>45</sup>Bariun, *Malik Bennabi*, Op. cit., p. 118.

<sup>46</sup>Bennabi, *Islam in History and Society*, Op. cit., pp. 90-102.

<sup>47</sup>Malik Bennabi, *Bayna al-Rashād Wa al-Tiḥi*, First Ed, Dimashq: Dār al-Fikr, 1978, p. 60.

<sup>48</sup>Bennabi, *Shurūt*, Op. cit., p. 53.

express this point in a slightly different way, one may say that man is responsible for his progress or decline in any stage of his development. However, we may underline the fact that human beings in certain moments of the social evolution may not be able to achieve the state of civilization; however, the opportunity is always open for regeneration and renewal. This second state of human shortcomings and failure is not like the spirit and tendency of the historical determinism which puts predetermined obstacles on the way of man and his development.

### **Conclusion**

Civilization follows in its march a determined but an open pattern. It commences, develops and then declines following a defined scheme of evolution which is of an open nature. However, this defined process is open for new human experiences whenever there is a new synthesis of man, soil and time. It is an open process because it transfers the values of civilization from one context to another and from one culture to another. This transforming process reflects the essence of civilization as a driving force behind the modifications and changes occurring in the individual and social context of the people in a given period of the civilizational development. Indeed, in order to grasp the essence of the cycle of civilization, one should refer to it as a tool of analysis and not a mere diagram to be followed by civilizations in history. It is evident that there is a resemblance between the views of both Ibn Khaldūn and Malik Bennabi on the notion of the cycle of civilization. Bennabi has benefited from the view of Ibn Khaldūn and further expanded them and introduced, in many instances, his own creative ideas and view. There is a need of further deliberation and researches over the views of the two great personalities, Ibn Khaldūn and Bennabi.