THE INTEGRATION OF MODERN PSYCHOLOGY IN MALEK BENNABI'S METHODOLOGY OF STUDYING CIVILIZATION

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Abstract

This research aims to analyze the integration of psychology in the methodology of Malek Bennabi in studying civilization. In order to achieve this goal, this study adopts an analytical approach to his writings. The study concluded that Bennabi, in his endeavor to study civilization and his adoption of civilization as an analytical unit for the problems of the Islamic world, constructed his civilizational perspective by integrating various sciences, especially the humanities and social sciences, in an interdisciplinary way. Hence, psychology was one of the sciences integrated in his methodology for studying civilization. The integration of psychology in Bennabi's writings entails an interest in the pioneers of psychology, their concepts, and their methodologies both critically and implicatively.

Keywords: Psychology; Bennabi; methodology of studying civilization; interdisciplinarity; civilizational perspective.

Khulasah

Penyelidikan ini bertujuan menganalisis integrasi psikologi dalam metodologi Malek Bennabi dalam mengkaji peradaban. Bagi mencapai tujuan ini, kajian ini menggunakan pendekatan analisis terhadap karya-karya beliau. Kajian ini menyimpulkan bahawa Bennabi, dalam usahanya untuk mengkaji peradaban

dan penggunaan peradaban sebagai unit analisis bagi masalah dunia Islam, telah membina perspektif peradabannya melalui pengintegrasian pelbagai ilmu, terutamanya sains kemanusiaan dan sains sosial, secara interdisiplin. Oleh itu, psikologi adalah salah satu bidang ilmu yang diintegrasikan dalam metodologi beliau bagi mengkaji peradaban. Integrasi psikologi dalam penulisan Bennabi melibatkan minat terhadap tokoh-tokoh perintis psikologi, konsep-konsep mereka, dan metodologi mereka, sama ada secara kritis mahupun implikasi.

Kata kunci: Psikologi; Bennabi; metodologi kajian peradaban; interdisiplinari; perspektif peradaban.

Introduction

Malek Bennabi's writings reveal an early recognition of the need for a deeper analysis of the civilizational crisis in the Muslim world. He criticized reformist and modernist trends for their superficial approaches and failure to identify root causes. [1] Bennabi argued that these efforts lacked a "systematic analysis of the ailment",[2] or a comprehensive study of societal pathology, which is essential for resolving the civilizational crisis. He conducted a critical review of modern Muslim ideologies to refine his ideas for cultural revitalization.[3] Bennabi argued that the crisis was not due to a lack of resources but stemmed from a lack of ideas since the post-Almohad era. He famously noted:

"The ongoing reality of the Muslim world's renaissance over a century, without achieving results comparable to other societies starting

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[1] Malek Bennabi, *Shurut al-Nahdah (Conditions of Renaissance)*, trans. 'Umar Kamil Misqawi & 'Abd al-Sabur Shahin (Damascus: Dar al-Fikr, 1986), 30-43.

[2] Bennabi, *Shurut al-Nahdah*, 40; Camilo Gomez-Rivas, *Law and the Islamization of Morocco under the Almoravids* (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 1.

[3] Fawzia Bariun, *Malek Bennabi: His Life and Theory of Civilization* (Petaling Jaya: Budaya Ilmu Sdn. Bhd, 1993), 147.

from the same point, is not due to a shortage of
means but rather a lack of ideas."[4]

According to Bennabi, it's crucial to consider the
historical evolution of the crisis in the Muslim world,
focusing on its essence rather than its surface
manifestations, to comprehend and address it effectively.
He contended that this crisis didn't emerge during the
colonial era but rather in the post-Almohad period, setting
the stage for colonial subjugation.[5] As a consequence,
colonialism wasn't the primary cause of the current state in
the Muslim world; rather, it was a secondary factor. The
main issue lies in the colonisability (susceptibility to
colonization), which reflects the weakness of our societies
and their submission to colonial powers.[6]

Hence, addressing the current situation in the Muslim
world requires a deep analysis surpassing surface-level
observations and symptoms. It also entails initiating a
systematic study of the historical evolution of
underdevelopment to discern its origins and pivotal
factors.[7] This requires a substantial emphasis on the study
of humans, their circumstances, and their cultures because
any change disregarding humans and their cultures is
considered unnecessary.

In Bennabi's view, the primary issue lies in the
absence of a "comprehensive study"[8] of the Renaissance
efforts and conditions in the Muslim world. He sought to
uncover the roots of the crisis by proposing a systematic
plan for the efforts of this movement and its activities,

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[4] Malek Bennabi, *al-Qadaya al-Kubra (The Grand Themes)* (Damascus:
Dar al-Fikr, 1991), 52.

[5] Bennabi, *al-Qadaya al-Kubra*, 52-53.

[6] Bennabi, *Shurut al-Nahdah*, 152-157.

[7] Malek Bennabi, *Fikrat Kumunwilt Islami (The Idea of an Islamic
Commonwealth)*, trans. al-Tayyib al-Sharif (Damascus: Dar al-Fikr,
2000), 22-25.

[8] Bennabi, *Fikrat Kumunwilt Islami,* 21.

grounded in diagnosing the various stages that Muslim society has traversed throughout history.

Following his critical evaluation of prior endeavors in the Muslim world, Bennabi's subsequent step was to identify the central theme or unit that could address the diverse aspects of the crisis. From his perspective, the central unit or idea—encompassing all partial diagnoses—was absent in the efforts of the renaissance due to the movement's lack of systematic and scientific thinking.[9] Hence, it's crucial to recognize that the Muslim world faces various crises encapsulated under the term "civilizational crisis."[10]

Political, economic, social, educational, and other crises in Muslim societies are merely symptoms of a deeper crisis. Any solution proposed to address these symptoms won't alter the status of Muslim individuals and societies; rather, it will likely worsen the crisis.[11] Therefore, the problem of every nation is essentially a problem of its civilization, and a nation cannot understand or solve its problem unless it elevates its thinking to human events and deepens its understanding of the factors that build or destroy civilizations.[12]

Hence, Bennabi stresses the importance of considering the various problems and facets as a unified issue, as they are interconnected to constitute a single entity: the civilization problem. This leads us to analyze these problems intended for resolution within the framework of civilization. In other words, the civilization problem, in all its phases, whether in its rise or decline, presents its own challenges and corresponding solutions.

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[9] Bariun, *Malek Bennabi*, 150.

[10] Malek Bennabi, *Dawr al-Muslim wa Risalatuh fi al-Thuluth al-Akhir min al-Qarn al-'Ishrin* (Damascus: Dar al-Fikr, 1991), 46.

[11] Bennabi, *Shurut al-Nahdah*, 41.

[12] Bennabi, *Shurut al-Nahdah*, 19.

Building on this premise, the examination of the current state of Muslim civilization served as the cornerstone for Bennabi's intellectual pursuits and his focus on studying civilization. Consequently, Bennabi directed all his efforts towards formulating a methodology for studying and advancing civilization. He consistently underscored that his focus lay in scrutinizing civilization and that the primary concern for humanity, regarded as a unit for analysis and study, is civilization because it encapsulates the core of our manifold issues.[13]

This selection of a unit for study and analysis led him to emphasize the necessity for an interdisciplinary integrated methodology, drawing upon various sciences to facilitate a comprehensive understanding of such phenomena.[14] Consequently, Bennabi advocated for the adoption of an integrated interdisciplinary methodology, which derived its general principles from diverse fields such as history, sociology, psychology, and metaphysics.[15]

Bennabi's dedication to studying civilization and employing it as the primary unit of analysis for understanding the conditions experienced by the Muslim world has been endorsed by many who have delved into his ideas. They recognized the study of civilization as his foremost concern and acknowledged his unique approach compared to other prominent thinkers. This uniqueness manifested in the terminologies, definitions, concepts, units of analysis, scope of analysis, and perspective he employed.[16]

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[13] Bennabi, *Shurut al-Nahdah*, 19.

[14] Bennabi, *Shurut al-Nahdah*, 61.

[15] Bennabi, *al-Qadaya al-Kubra*, 7; Malek Bennabi, *Milad Mujtama'*, (Damascus: Dar al-Fikr, 1986), 75.

[16] Bariun, *Malek Bennabi*; Mohamed El-Tahir El-Mesawi, *A Muslim Theory of Human Society: An Investigation into the Sociological Thought of Malek Bennabi* (Batu Caves: Thinkers Library Sdn. Bhd, 1998); 'Abd al-Latif 'Ubadah, *Safahat Mushriqah min Fikr Malik Binnabi* (Batna: Dar al-Shihab, 1984); Shayif 'Ukashah, *al-Sira' al-*

Moreover, they also observed that Bennabi, like any other thinker bearing a novel and profound message, needed to present his own terminologies, concepts, and definitions to convey his ideas effectively. While Bennabi drew extensively from existing reservoirs of ideas, including various patterns, schools of thought, methodologies, and other thinkers, he displayed creativity in synthesizing diverse ideas and proposing a new system for addressing issues pertaining to civilization.[17]

This research examines the integration of psychology within Bennabi's approach to studying civilization. It focuses on his adoption of civilization as the unit of analysis for addressing the problems of the Muslim world, his efforts to develop a unique civilizational perspective, and his reliance on the integrative, interdisciplinary application of various sciences, particularly the humanities and social sciences. To accomplish this, the research examines Bennabi's conceptualization of civilization and his methodology for studying it. Subsequently, it analyzes how psychology is integrated into Bennabi's approach, encompassing both psychological pioneers and their theories and methodologies.

Bennabi's Concept and Methodology to Study Civilization

When exploring Bennabi's concept of civilization, one encounters several definitions, indicating his multifaceted understanding of the term. This suggests that civilization itself is a multi-dimensional phenomenon, requiring the

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Hadari fi al-'Alam al-Islami (Damascus: Dar al-Fikr, 1986); As'ad al-Sahmarani, *Malik Binnabi Mufakkiran Islahyan* (Beirut: Dar al-Nafa'is, 1986); Sulayman al-Khatib, *Usus Falsafat al-Hadarah fi al-Islam* (Cairo: Maktabah al-Zahrah, 1986); Zaki al-Milad, *Malik Binnabi wa Mushkilah al-Hadarah* (Beirut: Dar al-Safwah, 1992).

[17] 'Abd al-Razzaq Qassum, "Ishkaliyat al-Hadarah fi Fikr Malik Binnabi," *Majallat al-Muwafaqat* 3 (1994), 290-298.

integration of various approaches and sciences for its comprehensive study.

i. Bennabi's Concept of Civilization

Malek Bennabi's exploration of civilization reflects his awareness of its linguistic and terminological connotations in both Islamic and Western contexts. He sought to offer a fresh perspective by understanding it from multiple angles. Bennabi defined civilization analytically using a mathematical equation:

$$[\text{Civilization} = \text{Human} + \text{Soil} + \text{Time}]$$

This formula implies that the civilization problem can be broken down into three primary components: the human element, the soil (matter) element, and the time element. To construct a civilization, we must address these three foundational issues rather than merely accumulate material products.[18]

Bennabi summarized civilization as the interaction between human endeavor, soil as the source of material progress, and time as a crucial factor.[19] He described civilization as "the sum total of ethical and material conditions that enable a particular society to offer each of its members, at every stage of their life from infancy to old age, the necessary support for their development."[20] It is the social endeavor aimed at providing the necessary support for individuals to fulfill their roles in history.

He viewed the function of civilization in terms of the guarantees it provides to individuals, encompassing both material and moral dimensions. These guarantees represent the amalgamation of moral and material factors that enable

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[18] Bennabi, *Shurut al-Nahdah*, 45.

[19] Badrane Benlahcene, "Civilizing Role of the 'Religious Idea' in Malek Bennabi's Thought," *Journal of Islamic Thought and Civilization* 13(1) (2023), 1-13, https://doi.org/10.32350/jitc.131.01.

[20] Bennabi, *al-Qadaya al-Kubra*, 43; Malek Bennabi, *Afaq Jaza'iriyah* (Cairo: Maktabah 'Ammar, 1971), 38.

a society to furnish every member with essential social
support for their growth. Thus, civilization embodies the
social performance across history.[21] If a society can provide
such ethical and material conditions that enable individuals
to fulfill their natural roles within the community at a
certain historical stage, then that society is considered to be
in a state of civilization.

Civilization is characterized by ethical and material
conditions, which must be balanced to prevent deviation. It
is also viewed as a social endeavor, emphasizing the
importance and primacy of society in the civilizational
process. Civilization is the manifestation of interconnected
social relationships, where individuals play a crucial role in
fulfilling their social roles. Additionally, civilization
signifies guarantees that enable both individual and social
potentials to thrive, facilitating material and moral
development. Finally, civilization represents social phases
experienced by societies, indicating the cyclical nature of
civilizational phenomena.[22]

Bennabi also saw civilization as the outcome of a
fundamental idea that propels it in history. He stated, "A
civilization is the result of a core idea that imprints itself on
a society in a pre-civilizational stage, ushering it into
history." [23] At its core, civilization is an idea and a
systematic project that activates social capabilities to
address pivotal societal problems. Ideas are a significant
social force, bestowing intellectual characteristics, cultural
authenticity, and social vitality on society. The idea is the
primary force that impels society into history to accomplish

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[21] Malek Bennabi, *Mushkilat al-Afkar fi al-'Alam al-Islami (The problem
of Ideas in the Muslim World)*, trans. Bassam Barakah and Ahmad
Sha'bw (Damascus: Dar al-Fikr, 2002), 42.

[22] Badrane Benlahcene, "The Study of Civilization; The Partial
Approaches and the Need for an Interdisciplinary Approach," *Tajseer
Journal* 4(1) (2022), 33-52, https://doi.org/10.29117/tis.2022.0083

[23] Benlahcene, "The Study of Civilization; The Partial Approaches and
the Need for an Interdisciplinary Approach," 41.

its mission and fulfill its responsibilities at a specific historical moment.

Therefore, Bennabi's definition of civilization focused on its structure and social essence. He asserted that civilization involves "learning to live in a community and recognizing the primary importance of the social network in organizing human life for its historical function."[24] This perspective highlights the importance of social relationships, making social interaction and education among community members possible and beneficial.

The phenomenon of civilization is complex and multidimensional. Bennabi's various definitions provide the basic elements of his approach to studying civilization. One definition emphasizes the structural elements of the civilization composition equation. Another indicates that civilization needs to achieve a balance between ethical and material aspects. Another highlights the need for organization, guidance, and planning. Additionally, civilization is the result of an idea and a project to carry out a specific task and accomplish a specific function at a particular time and place.

Bennabi also provided a functional definition of civilization, emphasizing its function. He then focused on its structure and essence, as well as its social and intellectual dimensions, considering it a cultural system. Analyzing Bennabi's concept of civilization reveals the various dimensions present in his understanding and the different methodologies he used to formulate his innovative perspective on civilization. This integrative approach allowed him to study the problem of underdevelopment in the Muslim world comprehensively.

Through these diverse definitions, Bennabi underscored the significance of an integrative approach to understanding civilization. He viewed civilization as a multidimensional concept that harmonizes its

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[24] Bennabi, *Milad Mujtama'*, 94.

interconnected parts into a dynamic whole. This perspective led him to adopt and advocate for an integrative approach in studying civilization as a complex phenomenon.

ii. Bennabi's Integrated Methodology for Studying Civilization

The definitions of civilization in Bennabi's thought imply an integrated approach to objectively engage with it, necessitating multiple disciplines to analyze civilization as a social phenomenon. Bennabi recognized the multifaceted nature of civilization and examined it from various angles, leveraging diverse fields of study. This led him to advocate for an interdisciplinary approach to studying civilization.

Bennabi emphasized that civilization is a social phenomenon rather than a purely materialistic one. He noted the complexity of social phenomena and the weaknesses in the methodologies of humanities and social sciences, which are less mature compared to natural sciences. Bennabi stated, "The humanities have not yet reached a stage where their terms are clearly defined in general, as has happened with the natural sciences."[25] This leads to scholarly discourse that may stray from scientific rigor, as seen in debates over terms like 'civilization' and 'civility' in Arab countries.[26]

Understanding civilization as a social phenomenon requires a thorough grasp of its nature and scope. Sociologists struggle to pinpoint the exact moment of the emergence or decline of a civilization and to explain its development causes accurately. Bennabi highlighted this complexity: "The rule in sociology is not as clear-cut as in sports, where there is a strict boundary between right and wrong, error and truth. Rather, it's a general guideline to avoid gross mistakes, as there cannot be a precise boundary

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[25] Bennabi, *Milad Mujtama'*, 7.
[26] Bennabi, *Milad Mujtama'*, 7.

between a civilization in formation and one that has fully
emerged."[27]

Civilization should be scientifically analyzed using the
scientific method. Despite being an engineer, Bennabi
understood the nature of social phenomena and their
requirements. He emphasized that this method must be
comprehensive, dealing with civilization as a whole rather
than fragmenting the analysis.[28] The approach should be
integrated and objective, uncovering the problem, studying
its origin, history, and causes.[29]

Bennabi did not rely solely on historians of
civilization, who focus on gathering and interpreting
historical events. Instead, he incorporated analysis from
psychology and sociology into his methodology.[30] These
disciplines play a crucial role in Bennabi's approach, as he
believed civilization involves both individual and societal
dimensions. He examined civilization using historical data
and psychological analysis techniques.

Bennabi stated, "This inquiry extends beyond
historical records to encompass psychological analysis."[31]
He viewed civilization not merely as a sequence of events
but as a phenomenon with an essence and a governing law.
This approach highlights the proactive role of religious idea
in shaping civilization, influencing individual behavior,
and regulating instincts within the functional structure of
civilization.[32]

The study of civilization necessitates integration
between the general principles derived from history,

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[27] Bennabi, *Shurut al-Nahdah*, 42-43.

[28] Bariun, *Malek Bennabi*, 147.

[29] Malek Bennabi, *Bayn al-Rashad wa al-Tiyh* (Damascus: Dar al-Fikr, 1978), 37.

[30] 'Abd al-Salam al-Ja'fari, *Mushkilah al-Hadarah 'ind Malik Binnabi* (Tripoli: al-Dar al-'Arabiyyah li al-Kitab, 1984), 63-64.

[31] Bennabi, *Shurut al-Nahdah*, 61.

[32] Bennabi, *Shurut al-Nahdah*, 61.

sociology, and psychology. [33] Bennabi's approach combined the tools provided by these sciences into a single analytical system. He believed that applying this integrated approach would help define the concept of civilization comprehensively, [34] including the perspectives of historical philosophers, historians, psychologists, and sociologists. Bennabi also believed that the study of civilization should focus on its implications through the integrated application of history, psychology, sociology, and metaphysics. [35] Bennabi asserted:

> "Studying history involves multiple facets. When approached from an individual standpoint, it becomes a psychological inquiry, examining humans as temporal psychological elements in the construction of civilization. However, civilization represents just one aspect of collective life and thought. From this perspective, history transforms into a social study, delving into the conditions of growth of a particular society, not solely determined by biological or political factors, but also shaped by its ethical, aesthetic, and industrial attributes within the framework of that civilization. Additionally, this society is not in isolation; its evolution is intertwined with necessary connections to the wider human community. This metaphysical dimension extends history beyond mere historical causality to grasp phenomena in their entirety. Such metaphysical aspects include causes that fall beyond what

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[33] Bennabi, *Milad Mujtama'*, 75.

[34] Malek Bennabi, *Mushkilat al-Thaqafah* (Damascus: Dar al-Fikr, 1984), 40.

[35] Bennabi, *Shurut al-Nahdah*, 119.

Toynbee termed the 'study area' of a specific
civilization."[36]

To study the phenomenon of civilization, Bennabi
integrated psychology, sociology, history, and metaphysics
into a unified system. The complexity of the civilization
phenomenon led to different approaches, and Bennabi
called for a more suitable methodology for its study. He
emphasized that the phenomenon of civilization must be
viewed from various perspectives and that a comprehensive
approach requires an integrative interdisciplinary
methodology, providing a comprehensive diagnosis and
understanding of the phenomenon. Civilization and its
course cannot be adequately studied through history alone
but require an integrative methodology that combines these
sciences.

The Significance of Psychology in Bennabi's Study of Civilization

Bennabi's primary aim was to identify a unit for analyzing
and addressing the issues of the Islamic world. He regarded
civilization as the pivotal unit of study, enabling a
comprehensive understanding and precise diagnosis of the
problem of civilizational stagnation in the Muslim world.
He recognized that fragmented treatment by various fields
of knowledge does not afford a holistic comprehension
conducive to tackling its challenges. Therefore, he
advocated for integrating sciences, including history,
sociology, psychology, and metaphysics.

Focusing on the role of psychology in Bennabi's
examination of civilization reveals that he extensively
utilized psychology to analyze the psychological aspects of
civilizational advancement. He was particularly interested
in understanding how to psychologically motivate Muslims

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[36] Malek Bennabi, *Wijhat al-'Alam al-Islami (Destination of the Muslim World)*, trans. 'Abd al-Sabur Shahin (Damascus: Dar al-Fikr, 2002), 25.

and provide solutions to overcome stagnation, enabling
them to assume an active role in shaping history and
contributing to the process of civilization.

To understand the substantial presence of psychology
in Bennab's approach to studying civilization, two
questions emerge: i. How did Bennabi engage with
psychology? ii. What were the primary figures and
concepts within psychology that inspired him?

i. Bennabi's Connection with the Field of Psychology

Several compelling reasons led Bennabi to delve into the
works of psychology and prominent psychologists of his
era:

Firstly, his emphasis on the human factor and the
internal dimensions of human personality naturally
propelled him to seek tools and methodologies for
understanding how human character could change and
develop in pursuit of civilization.

Secondly, Bennabi's intellectual and social
engagements during his stays in France and Egypt sparked
his curiosity and drove him to explore new discoveries in
modern sciences, including psychology. The works of
Sigmund Freud's *Psychological Analysis* (1856-1939),
Carl Gustav Jung's *Analytical Psychology* (1875-1961),
and Jean Piaget's *Developmental Psychology* (1896-1980)
left a profound impact on his writings.

Thirdly, a meticulous analysis of his autobiography[37]
and writings underscores the importance he placed on
psychology for understanding civilization. [38] Bennabi
focused on the psychological and social facets of
civilization, exploring psychology and its theoretical
frameworks to comprehend the mechanisms of

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[37] Malek Bennabi, *Mudhakkirat Shahid al-Qarn* (Damascus: Dar al-Fikr,
1993), 66 & 113.

[38] Malek Bennabi, *On the Origins of Human Society*, trans. M.T. El-
Mesawi (Kuala Lumpur: The Open Press, 1998), 89.

psychological and social transformations within the civilizational process.

Fourthly, Bennabi regarded religion as the defining element of human life, from its primitive social formations to its most advanced civilizations. He observed:

> "Traces of the religious idea persist throughout humanity's historical journey, from its zeniths of civilization to its nascent social stages. Archaeological evidence consistently reveals remnants of ancient human devotion to their religious rituals, regardless of their specific nature. Architectural evolution—from rudimentary cave worship to grandiose temples—has been intertwined with religious concepts, shaping human laws and sciences and giving rise to civilizations epitomized by sacred buildings. From these foundations, civilizations emerged to illuminate the world, flourishing in academia, laboratories, and political forums, with their laws rooted fundamentally in religion and their civil codes imbued with religious essence."[39]

The historical significance of religion in humanity's civilizational experiences requires understanding how religious ideas influence societal values and elevate human aspirations beyond earthly existence towards metaphysical ambitions.[40] Consequently, Bennabi engaged with religious scholars, philosophers, sociologists, and ethicists and confronted debates about religion's origin, nature, and function. He turned to psychology for insight, engaging with prominent psychologists like Freud and Jung to understand their perspectives on religion and its functions.

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[39] Malek Bennabi, *al-Zahirah al-Qur'aniyah*, trans. 'Abd al-Sabur Shahin (Damascus: Dar al-Fikr, 2000), 69.

[40] Bennabi, *Shurut al-Nahdah*, 61-68.

Despite theoretical disagreements, their methodologies were crucial to Bennabi's approach and critical incorporation of their ideas.[41]

Bennabi's understanding of civilization's cyclical nature and the primacy of individual agency in social change led him to consider various psychological approaches. He sought to comprehend the transition of individuals from isolated 'individuals' to integrated 'persons' within society through concepts such as adaptation, original models, integration, behavioral adjustment, repression, motivating forces, the role of religion, and their psychological implications.[42]

To develop his comprehension of societal psychosocial development, Bennabi turned to developmental psychology, particularly Piaget's insights. In his work *The Problems of Ideas in the Muslim World*, Bennabi specifically acknowledged Piaget's contributions to developmental psychology. Piaget's insights informed Bennabi's classification of societal psychosocial evolution into three stages: the age of things, the age of persons, and the age of ideas.[43]

Many scholars assert that Bennabi's concepts and terminology have a psychological backdrop, suggesting that he drew inspiration from psychology during his studies and residency in France.[44] Bennabi's exploration of

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[41] Mesawi, *A Muslim Theory of Human Society*, 11-25.

[42] Bennabi, *Shurut al-Nahdah*, 74.

[43] Bennabi, *Mushkilat al-Afkar*, 30, 40.

[44] 'Ali Qurayshi, *al-Taghyir al-Ijtima'i 'ind Malik Binnabi* (Cairo: Maktabah al-Zahra', 1988); El-Mekdad Shegab & Abdelkeddous Smati, "The Psycho-Sociological Perspective on Civilization: Insights from Malik Bennabi Theory," *International Journal of Islamic Thought* 19 (2021), 21-32, https://doi.org/10.24035/ijit.19.2021.192; Adnan Khalil Basha, "Malek Bennabi and His Modern Islamic Thought" (PhD diss., University of Salford, 1992), 73-84 & 124-125; Fawzia Bariun, "Malik Bennabi and the Intellectual Problems of the Muslim Ummah," *American Journal of Islam and Society* 9(3)

psychology and its integration into his methodology
highlights the core ideas of psychology present in his
thinking. This integrated approach enabled Bennabi to
develop a comprehensive understanding of civilization and
its challenges, emphasizing the necessity of
interdisciplinary study in addressing the complexities of
civilizational stagnation in the Muslim world.

Fundamental Ideas and Their Integration into Bennabi's Methodology

To understand the fundamental ideas and their integration
into Bennabi's methodology, it's beneficial to discuss them
through the lens of the three prominent figures in
psychology with whom Bennabi engaged. This approach
aids in comprehending his ideas, concepts, and
terminologies borrowed or adapted from various
psychological schools, and how he incorporated them into
his intellectual framework without being confined by them.

i. Freud's Presence in Bennabi's Methodology

In *The Conditions of Renaissance*, Bennabi emphasized the
intrinsic relationship between an idea and its carrier in
analyzing the evolution of civilization. He asserted that the
psychological and temporal values distinguishing a
civilization at any period reflect the historical embodiment
of this relationship. For instance, Bennabi stressed the bond
between Islam as an idea and Muslims as its adherents in
studying Islamic civilisation. [45]

Bennabi advocated "using psychoanalytic language to
trace the continuous progression of civilization as a
temporal representation of actions and reactions stemming
from the interaction between individuals and the religious
ideas motivating their actions."[46] He employed terms such

(1992), 325–337, https://doi.org/10.35632/ajis.v9i3.2571; El-Mesawi,
A Muslim Theory, 96-106.

[45] Bennabi, *Shurut al-Nahdah*, 67.

[46] *Ibid.*, 67.

as repression, instinct, and the religious factor, concepts established by Freud in his psychoanalytic framework. Additionally, Bennabi incorporated other relevant ideas from Freud's work into his analysis of civilization.

Freud articulated his perspectives on civilization in *Future of an Illusion* and *Civilization and Its Discontents*. Influenced by the evolutionary theory and Taylor's ethnographic concept of culture, [47] Freud shaped his understanding of civilization in anthropological evolutionary terms. He argued that religious systems, philosophy, and ideals of perfection stem from humanity's higher intellectual pursuits. Moreover, Freud contended that advancing civilization requires placing constraints on individual impulses.[48]

Freud posited that civilization emerges when society compels individuals to relinquish their instinctual desires and aggressive tendencies. Consequently, civilization imposes significant sacrifices on human sexuality and aggressive inclinations. [49] Repressing desires is vital for achieving civilizational goals, implying that coercion and renunciation of instincts are fundamental to every civilization's construction.[50] Freud argued that people are not inherently gentle beings seeking love but individuals who defend themselves when attacked. He asserted that a strong inclination towards aggression is inherent in human nature, disrupting relationships and necessitating cultural

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[47] Edward B. Tylor, *Primitive Culture* (New York: Gordon Press, 1974), 1/2.

[48] John Gabriel, *Freud and Society* (Ann Arbor: University Microfilms International, 1981), 58-59.

[49] Muhammad Abdul Jabbar Beg, *Perspectives of Civilization* (Kuala Lumpur: The University of Malaya Press, 1985), 77-84.

[50] Sigmund Freud, "Civilization and its Discontents", in *Great Books of The Western World*, ed. Mortimer J. Adler (Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica, inc., 1990), vol. 54, 792; Oliver Bert, "Freud and Lyotard on Civilization," *South African Journal of Philosophy* 17(2) (1998), 126.

imposition. He warned that civilization is perpetually
threatened by dissolution due to fundamental animosity
among individuals, necessitating the anticipation and
prevention of savage violence through the authorized use of
violence.[51]

Despite recognizing that the superego, in the religious
context, is viewed as an expression of God's will, Freud
remained attached to his concept of "religion as an
illusion." He contended that religion serves as a regulator
for the superego, governing the ego and its desires to
prevent them from spiraling out of control. He also
emphasized religion's role in fostering harmony and
solidarity.[52]

Bennabi argued that analytical psychology enhances
our comprehension of human religious experiences and
their significance in personal development. He asserted that
psychoanalysis is indispensable for gaining insight into the
religious phenomenon and its influence on shaping human
personality throughout civilization.[53] Bennabi drew upon
and acknowledged the utilization of certain Freudian terms,
such as 'instinct' and 'repression'. In examining Islamic
civilization, he argued that we must "fundamentally
examine the organic relationship linking an idea with its
foundation". [54] Consequently, all psychological-temporal
values distinguishing a particular level of civilization at any
given time are historical manifestations of this organic
relationship between a specific idea, like Islam, and the
individual serving as its tangible representation—the
Muslim.[55]

Bennabi turned to psychoanalysis to track the
continuous evolution of civilization as a temporal

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[51] Freud, *Civilization and its Discontents*, 787.
[52] Freud, *Civilization and its Discontents,* 767.
[53] Bennabi, *Shurut al-Nahdah*, 67.
[54] Bennabi, *Shurut al-Nahdah*, 67.
[55] Bennabi, *Shurut al-Nahdah*, 67.

expression of actions and reciprocal reactions arising from the interaction between the individual and the religious idea instigating movement and activity.[56] At the outset, the individual exists in their natural state, "yet the religious idea intervenes to subject their instincts to a conditional process, akin to what Freudian psychology terms as repression."[57] However, Bennabi viewed this repression as a manifestation of a process that "does not eliminate instincts but rather organizes them in a functional relationship with the requirements of the religious idea."[58] The religious idea doesn't nullify instincts but regulates them with specific rules, partially freeing the individual from the innate laws governing their body. Consequently, their existence conforms to the spiritual requirements dictated by the religious idea, leading their life according to spiritual laws.[59]

Bennabi used Freudian terms like 'instincts' and 'repression' to examine the impact of religious ideas on human behavior. He viewed the individual as partially liberated from instinctual impulses while wholly subjected to the spiritual demands instilled by the religious idea. Consequently, the religious idea emancipates the human psyche from the dominion of instinct, placing it under the sovereignty of the spirit, particularly in the initial phases of the civilizing process.

Bennabi regarded instincts as integral to human character, rejecting the notion that they are inherently malevolent traits to be discarded. Instead, he advocated for their redirection from their innate state to a more dynamic condition in the pursuit of civilization's goals.[60]

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[56] Bennabi, *Shurut al-Nahdah*, 67.
[57] Bennabi, *Shurut al-Nahdah*, 67.
[58] Bennabi, *Shurut al-Nahdah*, 67.
[59] Bennabi, *Shurut al-Nahdah*, 67.
[60] Bennabi, *Shurut al-Nahdah*, 67.

Despite Freud's view of "religion as an illusion", he saw religion as fulfilling the role of a provider for the superego, regulating the ego and its desires to prevent them from running amok. He also underscored religion's function in promoting harmony and solidarity.[61] In *Future of an Illusion*, Freud emphasized that religious doctrines are foundational to civilization, arguing that without belief in a divine order, people would feel exempt from obeying civilization's precepts, leading to chaos.[62]

Freud viewed the development of the super-ego in any given era of civilization as mirroring that of an individual, shaped by the influence of prominent figures who establish ideals and high standards for the cultural super-ego. Failure to adhere to these standards leads to a sense of conscience-induced anxiety.[63] Freud saw ethics as a therapeutic endeavor to achieve something through the super-ego's standards.[64]

However, Bennabi asserted that the role of religion, or the religious idea, is pivotal in initiating the process of civilization within any human society. For Bennabi, religion isn't merely an illusion but an integral aspect of the cosmic order. Its significance extends beyond its divine essence, encompassing its social function as a catalyst for human values. Religion uplifts the spirit, facilitates effectiveness, competence, and brilliance, and guides individual conduct by directing primal energies and enabling communal engagement. Additionally, religion provides the ethical dimension essential to civilization.[65]

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[61] Freud, *Civilization and its Discontents*, 793; Malek Bennabi, *Islam in History and Society*, trans. Asma Rashid (Islamabad: Islamic Research Institute,1988), 11.

[62] Sigmund Freud, *The Future of an Illusion*, trans. James Strachey (New York: Norton B Company Inc, 1961), 34.

[63] Freud, *Civilization and its Discontents*, 767 .

[64] Freud, *Civilization and its Discontents*, 800; Freud, *The Future of an Illusion*, 34.

[65] Bennabi, *Wijhat al-'Alam*, 54.

It's apparent that Freud's concepts influenced Bennabi's methodology, particularly in understanding the psychological function of religion in shaping human character. Bennabi adopted specific terminology and understandings from Freud to grasp how religion functions within the human psyche, directing individuals' and groups' vital forces toward a positive role in civilization. However, Bennabi's grasp of the philosophical framework underlying Freud's ideas enabled him to surpass Freud's backgrounds, tools, and analyses. This empowered Bennabi to localize and integrate them with critical awareness into his framework in a manner distinct from Freud's approach.

While Bennabi and Freud employed the concept of 'repression' concerning instincts, they diverged in the degree and method of repression. Whereas Freudian repression involves the suppression of instincts, Bennabi's interpretation suggests a redirection of internal impulses to prioritize the spirit's aspirations in the civilizing process.[66]

The final paragraph suggests seeking another source to understand Bennabi's psychological perspective on religion and its role in civilization, addressing the limitations of Freud's contribution. Consequently, the following section explores Jung's influence on Bennabi's thinking, offering an alternative intellectual foundation for Bennabi's methodology in examining civilization.

ii. Jung's Presence in Bennabi's Methodology

Bennabi makes multiple references to Jung in his writings, incorporating some of Jung's concepts uniquely.[67] One of Jung's central terms that Bennabi adopts is 'archetypes'. Jung developed the concept of archetypes to signify forms or ideas representing 'primary images' ingrained in the collective consciousness of humanity, illustrating religion's

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[66] Bennabi, *Milad Mujtama'*, 60-61.
[67] El-Mesawi, *A Muslim Theory*, 39.

presence in human personality.[68] He applied this term in his examination of ideas, positing that archetypes denote the foundational concepts of society, shaping its history and cultural identity distinctively. Bennabi asserts:

> "Civilization emerges from a fundamental idea imprinted on a society during a pre-civilization stage that permeates history. This society constructs its intellectual framework based on the original model of its civilization, rooted in a unique cultural milieu that delineates all its distinguishing characteristics from other cultures and civilizations."[69]

Both Jung and Bennabi use the term "original archetypes", but with differing interpretations and origins. Jung's archetypes encompass humanity's spiritual experiences, shaping collective consciousness, [70] while Bennabi's concept is grounded in religion, providing society with a cosmic perspective and a framework for existence.[71]

Bennabi acknowledges borrowing the term from Jung but introduces his ideas. He suggests that in a post-civilization phase, society loses its creative link to its original archetypes, core ideas inherited from previous generations. These archetypes also encompass practical ideas that each generation adjusts to suit its historical context. The primary archetypes form its ethical foundation, while practical ideas and technical means serve as cultural tools. Both elements significantly contribute to shaping its cultural landscape.

When the religious idea loses its vital motivating role, the civilizing process begins to deteriorate. This suggests

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[68] Carl Gustave Jung, *Psychological Types*, trans. H. G. Baynes (London: Routledge, 1989), 442.

[69] Bennabi, *Mushkilat al-Afkar*, 41.

[70] John James Clarke, *In Search of Jung* (London: Routledge, 1991), 117.

[71] El-Mesawi, *A Muslim Theory*, 28-129.

that the religious idea, which guides civilization, has ceased to function according to its original archetypes. The collapse of civilization begins "when the disconnect with the primary archetypes reaches its maximum, and our preconceived notions become erased within us, and our ideas placed and molded within those models become shapeless, lacking coherence, and devoid of significance."[72]

Bennabi also borrowed other terms and concepts, integrating them into his system. He employs the concepts of 'extroverted' and 'introverted', which Jung used in analytical psychology, to analyze the gradual integration of individuals into society from childhood. Bennabi confirms that he used these terms during an experiment teaching illiterate Algerian workers in France in 1938. The results were intriguing, as he was able to change the ideas, lifestyle, and even the outward appearance of these workers.[73]

Following this, Bennabi applied these terms at the social level to deal with various groups in society, such as rural and urban groups.[74] Beyond these borrowings from Jung, what's crucial is their shared understanding of religion's role in the civilizational process. Both emphasized religion's significance in providing original societal models, enhancing its historical mission, and guiding individuals to live and act in accordance with collective consciousness. They both rejected the positivist notion of human consciousness.

Bennabi, however, appears somewhat dissatisfied with Freud and Jung. He feels they don't adequately assist in studying the psycho-social role of individuals in civilization, despite the value of their contributions. Bennabi also expresses reservations about the philosophical and theoretical foundations of religion from which they

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[72] El-Mesawi, *A Muslim Theory*, 65.
[73] Bennabi, *Shurut al-Nahdah*, 78.
[74] Bennabi, *Shurut al-Nahdah*, 33.

originate, particularly with Freud's materialistic and positivist framework. Consequently, Bennabi turned to borrowing analytical tools from Jean Piaget.

iii. Piaget's Presence in Bennabi's Methodology

Bennabi built on Ibn Khaldun's concept of societal stages, emphasizing the parallels between human developmental stages and the psycho-social evolutionary stages of society. He expanded this by applying insights from modern psychology, particularly developmental psychology.[75]

In *The Problem of Ideas in the Muslim World*, Bennabi acknowledged the importance of using principles from developmental psychologists to study individual mental and cognitive growth. He provided a comprehensive explanation of individual mental growth theory, drawing on Piaget's theory of cognitive development, although he did not directly reference Piaget. Bennabi focused on how each stage impacts an individual's integration into society.[76] His delineation of the three stages of society reflects Piaget's concept of stages in human cognitive development.[77]

From a different angle, Bennabi sought to establish the phases through which societies progress along their historical trajectory. Historically speaking, he asserted that both individuals and societies undergo similar three stages: the material stage, the personal stage, and the intellectual stage.[78] While acknowledging the distinction between the individual and the collective (society), Bennabi emphasized that social transition from one stage to another isn't as straightforward as it is for individuals. He stated,

> "The social transition between stages isn't as obvious as that of individuals. Regardless of a society's level of development, it maintains its

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[75] Bennabi, *Mushkilat al-Afkar*, 36; Bariun, *Malek Bennabi*, 122.

[76] Bennabi, *Mushkilat al-Afkar*, 30-35.

[77] Frank J. Bruno, *Dictionary of Key Words in Psychology* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1987), 43.

[78] Bennabi, *Mushkilat al-Afkar*, 36.

complex cultural realm. Within its harmonized
activities, there's an interplay among the three
realms: material, personal, and intellectual."[79]

Nevertheless, he argued that a psychological approach
could facilitate comprehension of the qualitative changes
unfolding within society, evident in its social interactions.[80]
Thus, he suggested applying the methodologies devised by
developmental psychologists to the socio-psychological
development of communities.[81]

Upon careful analysis of how Bennabi and Piaget
employ terminologies, readers can distinguish significant
parallels between Piaget's delineation of the three stages of
individual cognitive development and Bennabi's concept of
societal ages: the age of things, the age of the persons, and
the age of ideas.

In Piaget's framework, the initial stage suggests that a
child's interaction with the external world is sensory and
mechanistic,[82] while in Bennabi's context, the first stage
implies that society shapes its judgments and decisions
based on standards set by the material world. This indicates
that society is still in its formative stages. Consequently, the
nature and quality of judgments are influenced primarily by
basic human needs and the tangible realities dictated by the
material world.[83] Materialistic thinking dominates society,
exerting control over both individuals and communities
across all aspects of life.

Piaget's second stage posits that children are yet to
engage in logical thinking, relying more on imitation of

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[79] Bennabi, *Mushkilat al-Afkar*, 36.
[80] Bennabi, *Milad Mujtama'*, 14.
[81] Bennabi, *Mushkilat al-Afkar*, 11.
[82] Barry J. Wadsworth, *Piaget's Theory of Cognitive and Affective
Development* (New York: Longman Publishers, 1996), 26.
[83] Bennabi, *Mushkilat al-Afkar*, 30-37.

their parents.[84] This aligns with Bennabi's second stage, the age of the persons, wherein the community forms judgments based on the standards of human interactions, providing models for emulation. During this stage, heroic figures hold sway over societal norms.[85]

The final two stages in Piaget's theory indicate that individuals reach maturity, capable of independent, abstract, and logical thought.[86] These stages correspond to Bennabi's age of ideas, where society attains maturity, and abstract ideals come to the forefront. Ideas become self-established and play a leading role in guiding the community's mission. In other words, Bennabi's focus on the processes and mechanisms that adapt and transform humans from their natural state into the state of 'personhood',[87] where they live according to certain higher ideals, led him to resort to developmental psychology.

Bennabi studied this adaptation process from a psychological perspective to understand it. Therefore, he applied Piaget's developmental psychology, which was primarily focused on individual mental growth, to society's psychological and social development. Perhaps Bennabi's application of developmental psychology, originally developed for studying individuals, to studying the psychological and social conditions of humanity was unprecedented among scholars of civilization, especially in the Islamic world.

Bennabi believed that relying solely on external observations and historical categorizations of stages was insufficient for studying the historical development of society in its civilizing journey. Instead, he argued that it

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[84] Herbert P. Ginsburg & Sylvia Opper, *Piaget's Theory of Intellectual Development* (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1988), 26.

[85] Bennabi, *Mushkilat al-Afkar*, 10.

[86] Wadsworth, *Piaget's Theory*, 26; Ginsburg, *Piaget's Theory of Intellectual Development*, 26.

[87] Bennabi, *Milad Mujtama'*, 31.

was necessary to consider the socio-psychological age of society to understand its cultural domain and to reach a deeper understanding of the mechanisms of change in society across its various historical stages.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this paper delves into the incorporation of modern psychology into Malek Bennabi's methodological approach to studying civilization. Bennabi's approach prompted him to explore diverse perspectives and concepts of civilization, acknowledging its complexity and multidimensionality. Consequently, he advocated for an interdisciplinary or integrative approach to study the phenomenon of civilization comprehensively. Psychology emerged as a crucial component within Bennabi's framework, and this paper primarily focuses on psychology and its integration into his thought and methodology.

Throughout his analyses, he applied the latest developments in psychological research of his time, particularly drawing from major schools such as psychoanalysis, analytical psychology, and developmental psychology. His familiarity with psychological research led him to recognize the importance of integrating psychology into studying civilization.

Bennabi believed that psychology could provide profound insights into the mechanisms of human personality change based on the lofty original models proposed by religious ideals. Consequently, he borrowed and adapted psychological concepts, terms, and techniques from various schools, integrating them into his system to form an interdisciplinary integrative approach to studying civilization. Thus, Bennabi designated psychology as one of the four key sciences for studying civilization, alongside sociology, history, and metaphysics.

His engagement with different schools of psychology and psychologists demonstrated his familiarity with their fundamental principles, orientations, and philosophical

underpinnings. Consequently, he approached intellectual borrowing from psychology with discernment, selecting elements that aligned with his methodology:

i. Engagement with Freud: Bennabi engaged with Sigmund Freud's psychoanalysis, recognizing its contributions to understanding the human psyche. However, he was critical of Freud's materialistic and positivist framework, which he felt inadequately addressed the spiritual and moral dimensions crucial to the civilizational process. Despite these reservations, Bennabi appreciated the insights Freud offered into human behavior and utilized aspects of psychoanalysis to explore the deeper psychological underpinnings of cultural and societal issues.

ii. Engagement with Jung: Bennabi's engagement with Carl Jung was more substantial. He adopted Jung's concept of archetypes, which he interpreted uniquely within the context of civilization. While Jung's archetypes represented universal symbols and motifs ingrained in the collective unconscious, Bennabi adapted this idea to signify foundational societal concepts that shape cultural identity and history. He believed that these archetypes provided a cosmic perspective and a framework for existence, essential for understanding and revitalizing civilization. Bennabi's use of Jungian terms like 'extroverted' and 'introverted' further exemplifies his integration of analytical psychology to analyze social behaviors and cultural orientations.

iii. Engagement with Piaget: Jean Piaget's developmental psychology significantly influenced Bennabi's analysis of societal stages. He paralleled Piaget's stages of cognitive development in individuals with the historical evolution of societies. Bennabi identified three stages of societal development: the material stage, the personal stage,

and the intellectual stage, mirroring Piaget's sensorimotor, preoperational, and formal operational stages. This analogy allowed Bennabi to emphasize the importance of psychological development in understanding societal transformations.

Bennabi's integration of psychology into his study of civilization represents a pioneering effort in localizing modern sciences to address diverse social challenges. His approach was characterized by critical discernment, distinguishing between universal scientific principles and culturally specific applications tied to different cultural contexts. By doing so, Bennabi effectively localized modern psychological concepts to align with the cultural and social realities of the Muslim world.

His work highlights the significance of interdisciplinary study and the necessity of adapting modern scientific concepts to fit local contexts. Bennabi's nuanced understanding and integration of psychology into the study of civilization provide a model for how contemporary scholars can approach the complex issues facing societies today. Through his innovative methodology, Bennabi offered a comprehensive framework that not only acknowledges the complexity of civilization but also provides practical tools for addressing its challenges.

In summary, Bennabi's methodology exemplifies how modern psychology, through the lenses of Freud, Jung, and Piaget, can be effectively integrated into the study of civilization. His approach underscores the importance of interdisciplinary study, the critical adaptation of scientific concepts to local contexts, and the ongoing relevance of psychology in understanding and addressing the civilizational issues of the Muslim world. This paper has highlighted Bennabi's pioneering efforts and the lasting impact of his work on the study of civilization and its multifaceted challenges.

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