The Constructed Ethical Civilization in the Philosophy of Malek Bennabi and Its Consequences

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Article Info	ABSTRACT
Article type: Research Article **Article history:** Received: 28 January 2025 Received in revised form: 21 June 2025 Accepted: 07 July 2025 Published online: 22 December 2025 **Keywords*:*** *Contextualism, Deontological Ethics, Human Rights, Islamic Civilization, Malek Bennabi, Valorization of War.*	This article examines the civilizational thought of Malek Bennabi and demonstrates how his critique of the foundational assumptions of Western civilization provides the groundwork for Islamic civilizational renewal. Bennabi argues that Western civilization presupposes a universal truth and regards the civilization it has produced as the ultimate embodiment of that truth. By contrast, he maintains that truth is situated and communitarian: each *ummah* is endowed with a form of truth corresponding to its collective capacity, and no community may claim exclusive access to absolute truth. According to Bennabi, these communal truths are context-bound and contingent. He identifies a range of factors that condition and delimit truth, emphasizing in particular the dominant spirit of a people and the culture that permeates social life as the primary constituents of civilizational truth. This study adopts a comparative-analytical approach to examine Bennabi's civilizational ethics and political thought. The research is based on library sources and employs thematic content analysis to extract core conceptual patterns from Bennabi's writings. The findings indicate that Bennabi's civilizational framework assigns Muslims the responsibility of constructing a distinctive civilization aligned with their own talents and dispositions. His ethical schema culminates in a form of *communitarian deontology*, in which moral obligation is conferred upon the moral agent by the *ummah*. Within this paradigm, war is valorized over peace, insofar as every civilization is required to engage in continuous struggle to preserve its identity. Moreover, Bennabi's model entails the fusion of religion and politics, rendering ethics subordinate to religion and challenging the normative authority of Western human rights discourse. From this perspective, each *ummah* is entitled to construct a legal system consistent with its own civilizational ethos.

1. Introduction
This study engages with the civilizational philosophy of Malek Bennabi, a twentieth-century Algerian thinker who sought to critique the epistemological foundations of Western modernity while laying the groundwork for an authentically Islamic civilizational project. His thought provides a robust conceptual framework that challenges the universalist assumptions embedded in Western political and moral discourse, particularly with respect to truth, ethics, and human agency.

2. Problem Statement
At the core of Bennabi's critique lies a fundamental rejection of the Western presumption of a universal and transhistorical truth - one that finds its sole realization in the historical trajectory of Western civilization. Bennabi contends instead that truth is both situated and communitarian, such that each *ummah* receives and discloses a specific modality of truth corresponding to its existential and cultural conditions. From this standpoint, Western claims to universality become philosophically and ethically problematic.

3. Background
Bennabi's position implicitly draws upon a post-Hegelian, ethnocentric conception of spirit and culture, according to which the essence of truth remains constant while its manifestations vary across historical and communal contexts. This ontological plurality of appearance, in Bennabi's view, legitimizes the pursuit of multiple, historically grounded civilizational orders. His approach also resonates with contemporary strands of social constructivism, providing a conceptual foundation for pluralistic and culturally situated models of civilization-building.

4. Methodology
This paper adopts a concept-driven, a priori, and comparative-analytical methodology, drawing on Bennabi's primary texts through library-based document analysis. Key civilizational concepts—such as the receptacle of truth, culture, the spirit of the *ummah*, and situated truth—are identified and organized into a logical hierarchy in order to trace the inferential and structural coherence of Bennabi's civilizational model. Each concept is interpreted within its textual context, and the logical relations among them are clarified to reconstruct the architecture of Bennabi's civilizational thought.

5. Findings
The analysis yields several key insights:

1. Truth cannot be generalized from one nation to another; all forms of truth—including ethics, religion, and politics—are culturally and historically situated.
2. Every reformative endeavor must be rooted in the cultural and historical reality of the community concerned.
3. Civilizational projects must be psychologically and sociologically compatible with the existential capacities of the masses.
4. Individual moral agency is insufficient; agency emerges from within the collective soul of the *ummah* and is shaped by its normative constraints.
5. This framework culminates in a model of contextual deontology, in which moral obligations arise from and remain bound to communal determinants.
6. No universal ethical system applies uniformly to all moral agents; each ethical order must emerge from its own ethno-historical context.

Consequently, no single conception of human rights can claim universal legitimacy. Every people is entitled to formulate a legal order grounded in its own civilizational ethos. What emerges, therefore, is not "human rights" in the singular, but a plurality of historically contingent human rights, each normatively valid only within the boundaries of its cultural genesis.

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