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Activating Doctrine Through the Perceptual Image: in Malek Bennabi's Framework

Abstract

The paper explores Malek Bennabi's use of perceptual and cognitive images as tools to counter colonial intellectual hegemony. It analyzes the methodological foundations of his approach and categorizes examples according to his three worlds: the world of things, the world of people and the world of ideas. The discussion integrates a monotheistic worldview perspective. The study concludes by underscoring the significance of perceptual images in addressing contemporary civilizational challenges within Bennabi's doctrinal framework, while outlining their methodological features

Keywords: *Perceptual image, metaphorical image, religious idea, ultimate appeal, monotheistic worldview*

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Doktrinanın qavrayışsal təsvir vasitəsilə aktivləşdirilməsi: Malek Bennabi-nin çərçivəsində

Xülasə

Bu tədqiqat, Malek Bennabi-nin müstəmləkə intellektual hegemoniya ilə mübarizədə qavrayışsal və idrak təsvirlərdən istifadə üsulunu araşdırır. Onun yanaşmasının metodoloji əsaslarını təhlil edir və nümunələri “şeylər aləmi”, “insanlar aləmi” və “ideyalar aləmi” adlı üç kateqoriyaya uyğun təsnif edir. Müzakirə, tövhidçi dünyagörüşü perspektivini inteqrasiya edir. Tədqiqat, Bennabi-nin doktrinal çərçivəsində müasir mədəni problemlərə qarşı qavrayışsal təsvirlərin əhəmiyyətini vurğulamaqla yanaşı, onların metodoloji xüsusiyyətlərini xülasə edərək nəticələndirilir.

Açar sözlər: *qavrayışsal təsvir, məcazi təsvir, dini ideya, son müraciət, tövhidçi dünyagörüşü*

Introduction

Intellectual literature is complex due to the multiple levels of analysis and interpretation, as well as the different abilities of authors to convey their ideas to readers. Metaphor is an effective tool for communication and idea transmission because it helps simplify abstract meanings for the audience.

Malik Bennabi is considered one of the contemporary thinkers in the field of intellectual studies, concerned with the causes of its formation, stability and decline. He placed faith at the core of civilizational development and competition and extensively used metaphor to express the major concepts that shape human perception of life.

This paper examines the importance of the perceptual image in activating faith-based perceptions in Bennabi's thought through the following questions:

- What are the intellectual foundations behind Bennabi's use of perceptual images?
- What are the characteristics of perceptual images he employed to reinforce belief?

The paper aims to highlight the scientific and civilizational necessity of perceptual images in contemporary theological discourse and to identify the models and perceptual images used by Malik Bennabi to activate the doctrine and examine their characteristics.

Research

The paper adopts a model-based analytical approach due to the complexity of the subject, relying on a partial review of selected works in which Bennabi discussed faith-based perceptions, whether as a foundational principle or in terms of their practical impact on civilization. This selection is necessary because Bennabi did not dedicate a separate work to faith as specialized studies do. Instead, he addressed it across his writings, depending on the theme of each book and the context of his analysis.

The perceptual images Bennabi employed were categorized according to the three realms through which he interprets the phenomenon of civilization. They were analyzed based on their content and their epistemological and civilizational dimensions. By the end of the paper, the significance of perceptual images in presenting religious thought becomes evident, along with the gaps that require further independent studies.

The study of perceptual images is relatively new, and the researcher did not find a study that dealt with the field in Bennabi's thought. However, there are partial studies on certain variables related to the topic:

Foreign Studies on Perceptual Images in Intellectual Writing: I did not find the term perceptual image in Western studies. Instead, the term mental image is commonly used, primarily in communication and marketing. Another closely related term is metaphor, which has been extensively studied across various fields. The following are some relevant works, selected within the scope and purpose of this paper:

- *Metaphors We Live By* (Lakoff & Johnson, 2009): This book argues that metaphor is essential to human understanding, language, and daily life. It categorizes metaphors into orientational (e.g., up and down) and ontological (using different structures to express ideas). The authors explore the tension between subjectivity and objectivity in the scientific use of metaphors, advocating for a "third way" that balances between unrestrained subjectivity, which endlessly generates meanings, and rigid objectivity, which stifles them.

- *The Power of Mental Images – How Visions Transform the Mind, Humanity, and the World* (Hutter, 2014): The book explores how mental images are formed and their impact on shaping life, as it defends the argument that precise science is incapable of explaining human nature without employing metaphor. It also highlights the strong influence of mental images on behavior, thinking patterns, and life in general.

- *The Role of Metaphor in Philosophical Communication* (Sausheva, 2017): This academic paper discusses the role of metaphors in philosophical communication and how they allow us to understand realities that are not directly observable. It sheds light on the specific use of metaphors in philosophy and how they can help redefine philosophical discourse in language, making it more accessible to perception and understanding.

- *A Metaphor and Model Paradigm of Religious Thinking* (G. McGrady, 1987): The study provides a theoretical framework for understanding the cognitive processes involved in religious thinking.

The study examines the use of metaphors and models in religious thinking, concluding that religious thought is distinct from other forms of discourse due to its reliance on metaphors and extended metaphorical systems, known as models.

Despite the strong technical and procedural aspects evident in Western studies and their methodological approach, they generally lack organizing, comprehensive worldview in their use of metaphors. Their perspective is often detailed and partial rather than holistic and teleological. When addressing the issue of reference, they either reject it entirely or favor a church-based framework in a way that requires significant logical support for perceptual images.

Method

In the following, we will present the premises of the analytical approach applied in this study. For methodological precision, it is essential to define its key terms.

1.2 The Concept of Perceptual Image

Perceptual images intersect with multiple fields of knowledge due to their strong connection to human existence, both as the subject and object of study. For this reason, the conceptual cluster approach has been adopted, as it allows for overcoming terminological differences and leveraging conceptual similarities to set the intended meaning (Bennett, Tony, et al., 2010, pp. 21, 26).

1.2.1 Image and Visualization:

The first thing that appears in the definitions is that the place of visualization is the mind. Al-Sharif Al-Jurjani (1983, p. 59) defines visualization as “the formation of an image of something in the mind.” Another definition from Al-Mu‘jam Al-Wasī (Academy of the Arabic Language, 1972, p. 528) states that *taṣawwur* (visualization) means “to form an image and shape of something” or “to imagine and bring its image to mind.” The term image is often contrasted with matter, as explained by Ziadeh, Maan, et al. (1986, p. 537): “The matter and image of a thing—the image here being the defining aspect, while matter is what is defined. In other words, they correspond respectively to form and content.”

This divergence highlights that the image is one of the key issues in the theory of existence. Some, like Aristotle, argue that an image is merely an essence in the mind, distinct from the actual existing thing, whereas others like Plato, see no difference between an image and the material existence of a thing. A similar debate can be found among Muslim philosophers such as Al-Razi and Ibn Sina. In modern epistemology, Kant differentiates between sensory science and the rules that organize it, which he considers to be its image. In the field of logic, an image represents a limited mental concept—it is the form of thought without its content, manifested through symbols, relationships, and rules of reasoning (Ziadeh, Maan, et al., 1986, pp. 537-538). A psychological definition found in Al-Mu‘jam Al-Wasī (Academy of the Arabic Language, 1972, p. 528) describes visualization (*taṣawwur*) as “bringing to mind the image of a perceived object without altering it.”

Based on the epistemological approach of this paper, which focuses on studying perceptual images in their civilizational dimension rather than their philosophical aspect, and in light of the previous definitions, the concept of *taṣawwur* (conception) adopted here is: a mental formation that both influences and is influenced by reality.

1.2.2 Metaphorical Images

Metaphorical images are fundamental components of perceptual images. They are not merely an aesthetic feature of language but a core element in human perception and expression of reality (Lakoff & Johnson, 2009, p. 219). A metaphorical image consists of two aspects: one tangible, drawn from our direct and familiar world, and the other abstract, representing the realm of ideas. In this way, metaphorical images both shape and result from human perception of reality, Abdelwahab Elmessiri employed them synonymously with perceptual images in multiple instances.

1.2.3 Mental Images

When the term “mental” is added to “image” in linguistic dictionaries, additional dimensions emerge. Al-Tahanawī defines a mental image as “that by which a thing is absolutely distinguished in the mind.” He further explains that one of its characteristics—referred to as a mental image—is that its existence in the mind is influenced by preceding knowledge, either strengthening or weakening it. He states (Tahanawī, 1996, pp. 1100–1101): “Mental images assist one another in formation, if the

mind is devoid of knowledge, grasping a concept is extremely difficult. However, once it acquires some knowledge, its capacity for further understanding increases, and it more readily assimilates new ideas." This addition highlights the nature of how mental images form in human cognition.

Among the advanced definitions that incorporate multiple epistemological dimensions—such as philosophy, psychology, and media studies—is that a mental image is “the return of sensations in the mind in the absence of the objects that provoke or express them” (Arabic Language Academy, Philosophical Dictionary, 1983, p. 107). An example of this is how metaphors evoke sensations by recalling sensory perceptions even when the actual stimuli are absent. A closely related definition describes it as “a cognitive-psychological process with cultural roots, based on individuals’ selective, direct, and indirect perception of the characteristics and attributes of a given subject” (Al-Ahmar, 2016, p. 12).

1.2.4 Perception and Perceptual Image

Before defining the final meaning of *perceptual image*, it is useful to examine the concept of *perception* and its relevance to the subject. Al-Tahanawı (1996, p. 129) states that perception is “*synonymous with knowledge in the sense of the image formed of an object in the mind, whether that object is abstract or material, partial or total, present or absent, and whether it exists within the perceiver or in an external instrument.*” This broad definition suggests that perception encompasses everything that reaches the mind from external sources. It is not limited to sensory perception alone, nor does it exclusively deal with abstract concepts over tangible ones, or partials over totals, which is what cognitive models with a materialist background are biased towards. To conclude this terminological tour, here are the basic components of the term perceptual image:

- A mental perception of a subject that is direct, spontaneous, and holistic.
- A condensed form rich with details of the phenomenon and its multidimensional origins.
- Implicitly carries a specific worldview.
- Shapes and directs behavior.

2.2 Methodological Foundations

The study adopts a set of methodological foundations that shape its analytical model, as follows:

2.2.1 The Limitations of Language and the Necessity of Metaphor

The use of metaphor in everyday life indicates that humans cannot rely solely on literal, direct language for expression, for instance, phrases like “*the leg of the table*” illustrate this limitation. The challenge becomes even greater when discussing abstract or unseen concepts (El-Messiri, *Dialogues with Dr. Abdel Wahab El-Messiri on Culture and Methodology*, 2010, p. 362).

Toshihiko Izutsu argues that metaphor is an essential feature of Islamic philosophy and serves a necessary cognitive function rather than merely an ornamental one. He explains that the intended meaning is “*so precise and elusive at the level of logical thought that the human mind would be incapable of grasping it without metaphor*” (Izutsu, 2019, pp. 45-46).

In this context, Bennabi compares the human intellect to a lighthouse illuminating a small island within a vast ocean, emphasizing that its linguistic capacity to name things is limited by its ability to recognize them. Consequently, humans rely on metaphor to name what they perceive as reality (Bennabi, *The Problem of Culture*, 2000, p. 20).

Studies in the field of terminology generation highlight the necessity of metaphor in linking the original meaning to the new meaning when forming terms. As Khasra (2013, pp. 224-225) states: “The linguistic rule that governs this change to ensure that the derivative meaning does not lose its connection to the original meaning is metaphor.”

A best example of this is the faith-related vocabulary introduced to the Arabic language through the Quran, such as *iman* (faith) and *zakat*. These terms initially carried broad meanings but later acquired specific connotations, with metaphor serving as the bridge between the two (Khasra, 2013, p. 227).

2.2.2 Subjective and Objective Language

This principle is fundamentally based on the distance between the signifier and the signified—that is, between words and reality. A materialist perspective eliminates this distance entirely, asserting

an absolute correspondence between statements and their objective truth, or a complete disconnect where meaning is absent (A Group of Authors, 1998, pp. 63, 64, 66). On the other hand, the monotheistic perspective considers this distance to be dynamic, continuously shifting based on the interaction between the observer and the observed. The closer the two are, the higher the interpretative accuracy, rather than claiming absolute correctness (Lakoff & Johnson, 2009, p. 187).

2.2.3 Perceptual Image and Action

Every rational human behavior is necessarily based on a mental perception, as Ibn al-Qayyim (p. 252) states: "The foundation of every theoretical knowledge and voluntary action is thoughts and ideas, for they produce perceptions, perceptions lead to desires, desires result in actions, and repeated actions become habits." Furthermore, metaphors play a crucial role in shaping perceptions, which in turn drive behavior into existence (Lakoff & Johnson, 2009, p. 187).

Many psychological studies have confirmed this and provided precise explanations of the stages of behavior formation in children. For instance, Piaget's theory is fundamentally based on pre-existing mental imagery. It asserts that human spontaneous habits are governed by conceptual frameworks rooted in cognitive images and metaphors that individuals internalize (Lakoff & Johnson, 2009, p. 187).

2.2.4 Epistemological Integration: (Dialectic Theology and Literature as a Model)

The materialist perspective advocates for the separation of different fields in the study of humanity under the pretext of objectivity, whereas the monotheistic perspective defends epistemological integration between disciplines (El-Messiri, *Language and Metaphor Between Monotheism and Pantheism*, 2002, p. 7). For instance, if the phenomenon of metaphor were analyzed solely from an aesthetic perspective without considering its ethical value, its outcomes might contradict the moral principles that serve humanity. The correct approach lies in studying it in light of the ethical values it promotes, as well as the psychological and cognitive contexts that characterize it. This should be done within an analytical model that encompasses a guiding worldview with a clear stance on its three fundamental elements: God, human beings, and the universe (El-Messiri, *Language and Metaphor Between Monotheism and Pantheism*, 2002, p. 5). Bennabi adopted a similar analytical approach by integrating different fields of knowledge in his study of civilization. He employed history on one hand, psychology on the other, and logical reasoning to connect them all within a comprehensive worldview that recognizes the reference to a Creator who guides humanity and governs the laws of the universe.

The study seeks to approach the topic of perceptual images from two main perspectives: first, through the approach of dialectic theology (Ilm al-Kalam) and creed on the one hand, and through literature, with varying degrees of emphasis depending on the study's objectives and scope on the other. It adopts a worldview-based approach to theological and doctrinal issues, relying on research that calls for the renewal of dialectic theology (Ilm al-Kalam) to align with contemporary challenges. This approach is classified into the following categories: Theological aspect: focuses on purely unseen matters such as the existence of God, prophethood, good, evil, resurrection, judgment and interfaith relations. Humanities aspect: examines human-related issues from a monotheistic perspective, both at the individual and collective levels, including freedom, responsibility, human action, social and ethical issues, and more. Natural Sciences aspect: explores the relationship between monotheism, science, creation, and humanity's role in the universe. (Nafati, 2011, p. 74). The paper chooses this approach because of its alignment with the characteristics of its subject matter, which include:

- Extending into various scientific disciplines, unlike traditional dialectic theology, which was primarily limited to rational debate.
- Expanding beyond theological discourse to include classifications such as natural sciences and humanities from a monotheistic reference point.
- Prioritizing the civilizational dimension of theological concepts rather than limiting them to philosophical or purely rational aspects.

Results

The following section highlights Malek Bennabi's deliberate and direct focus on perceptual imagery, its foundations, and its various applications. This will be demonstrated through:

- The epistemological and methodological foundations upon which perceptual imagery is based, which were clearly present in Bennabi's writings.
- Examples of direct and explicit uses of perceptual imagery.
- A classification and analysis of various mental and perceptual images.

3.1 Methodological Foundations:

Bennabi's analysis of complex phenomena is based on a set of epistemological foundations that serve as a methodological pillar for his use of perceptual image in analysis, which include the following:

3.1.1 The Perceptual Image's Reliance on Worldview:

Bennabi argues that the essence of Quranic metaphor lies in its absolute divine background, which transcends the boundaries of time and space. He explains that the nature of pre-revelation Bedouin society was inherently inclined toward metaphor, yet its metaphors were bound by local references without a grand unseen framework. The Quran, however, introduced a radical transformation in the structure of perceptual image system by providing a transcendent unseen reference that shaped a new worldview. This shift was revolutionary for the Arabic language (Bennabi, *The Quranic Phenomenon*, 2000, p. 191).

3.1.2 Science Analyzes, While Reality Synthesizes:

Bennabi asserts that science functions by deconstructing phenomena, whereas reality operates in the opposite manner, synthesizing elements into coherent wholes. This forms a fundamental principle of perceptual images, namely its synthetic nature. He states: "*When elements are compatible and capable of integration, life forms a synthesis. However, when they are scattered and contradictory, it results in mere accumulation, which is synonymous to chaos.*" (Bennabi, *The Direction of the Islamic World*, 1988, p. 77).

3.2.0 The Limitations of Human Perception in Defining Objects:

The human need for metaphorical imagery to perceive reality is, in itself, a direct acknowledgment of the inability to fully grasp it through literal language alone. Bennabi argues that defining something means assigning it an image, which constitutes perception. He illustrates this concept using a mental image, stating: "*The 'ego is a small island within an unlimited field that represents the unconscious (...). However, when it enters this illuminated zone, its presence becomes real, its personality is revealed, and a name is assigned to it. This is the process of perception when we attempt to understand things from a psychological perspective—that is, from the viewpoint of the individual.*" (Bennabi, *The Problem of Culture*, 2000, pp. 20–21).

3.1.4 Epistemological Integration as a Methodological Necessity:

Bennabi justified his use of psychological analysis in the study of religious phenomena, arguing that abstract rational thought alone is insufficient for such an analysis (Bennabi, *The Conditions of the Renaissance*, 1986, p. 13). This led him to rely on perceptual image, which allowed language to expand and adequately express complex phenomena that intertwine the unseen and human psychology. Had he confined himself to strict mathematical logic—which does not acknowledge gaps between numbers—he would have struggled to account for the interpretative spaces that metaphorical language provides. These gaps, rather than negating intellectual rigor, integrate with it to offer a broader understanding of phenomena. As Bouchaâla (2023, p. 15) explains: "He often addresses such phenomena in the form of mathematical equations, enabling him to isolate their components and highlight the underlying relationships in a way that aligns the elements interactively, ultimately generating a coherent concept or proposition."

3.2.0 Explicit Applications of Cognitive Imagery:

A significant number of cognitive images explicitly employed by Bennabi have been identified, however, due to space constraints, we will limit the discussion to two examples.

3.2.1 The "Conflict of the Clay and the Iron" Model:

Bennabi highlights the danger of neglecting perceptual image in confronting colonialism, as it can lead to psychological defeat even before the battle begins. He states (Bennabi, *Between Guidance and Misguidance*, 2002, p. 26): "This image has long numbed consciences during the colonial era and has served its policies well, as it functioned as a psychological barrier preventing the unleashing of revolutionary energy among the colonized generations. Perhaps we must reframe this image in a way that is more aligned with the reality of revolutionary struggle against colonial authority: it is a conflict between nothingness and iron. Who, after all, can destroy nothingness, which, in its essence, is indestructible?"

3.2.2 The "Palm Mirror" Model for Guiding Perception

Bennabi dissects in this model a highly dangerous cognitive image, as it pertains to shaping perception—an approach employed by the colonizer to direct the understanding of a subject in a predetermined manner. To illustrate this, he likens it to a society being represented in a theatrical play, where a spotlight is cast upon a specific part of the stage that highlights the negative aspects intended for dissemination, while the rest of the stage is left in darkness, rendering it invisible. This manipulation convinces the entire society that they embody that darkened corner in reality (Bennabi, *The Intellectual Struggle in Colonized Countries*, 1981, p. 62).

3.3.0 Examples of Perceptual Images in the Writing Style:

The objective was not to exhaustively track all cognitive and mental images found in Bennabi's writings, but rather to investigate them as analytical tools for constructing religious perceptions. The primary works examined in this context include *The Problem of Culture*, *Reflections*, *The Conditions for Renaissance*, *The Birth of a Society*, *The Problem of Ideas*, *The Quranic Phenomenon*, and *The Intellectual Struggle in Colonized Countries*. Through a set of conceptual terms, Bennabi dissects ideas and builds his analyses, such as the civilization complex, tension, the spiritual spark, the man of natural disposition, civilizational dynamics, the religious idea, vital energy, the symbolic anthem, the post-Muwahhidun human, and other expressions closely linked to the subject of study.

The paper relied on Malik Bennabi's classification of the three realms (things, people, and ideas) in presenting perceptual images, drawing on classifications created by Sayyid Qutb through his reflections on artistic imagery in the Qur'an (Qutb, *Artistic Imagery in the Qur'an*, 2014, p. 71). Some classifications were shared across the three realms, such as those based on imagination, parables, mental concepts, and psychological states, whereas others were specific to one or two of these realms. Each tangible and embodied perceptual image was classified as being inspired by the realm of things, any image derived from events, movement, or occurrences—whether narrated by the author himself or relayed from others—was categorized as a perceptual image drawn from the realm of people. Meanwhile, any image extracted from the context of speech and the interconnection of the author's ideas was classified as inspired by the realm of ideas.

It is worth noting that this classification involves a high degree of overlap, both in the structural integration of Bennabi's and Sayyid Qutb's classifications and in the nature of the selected image, due to the complexity of human phenomena and the deep interconnection among the three realms. I have endeavored to title a concise title to each perceptual image while preserving the essential words that define its dimensions, then followed it by the original text as it appears in the source to clarify the full scope of the image as intended by the author.

3.3.2 Perceptual Images from the Realm of Things:

These are perceptual images in which metaphor is employed—either through sensory imagination to illustrate an abstract idea, embodiment to render it in tangible forms, or personification, where material entities are given life. Numerous examples exist, among which are the following:

• A Cosmic Destiny... No Civilization without Vision to the Sky:

A perceptual image that illustrates the impossibility of civilization without a religious idea. Bennabi states (*Conditions of the Renaissance*, 1986, p. 51): "Civilization does not emerge in any nation except in the form of a revelation descending from the sky, providing people with a law and a path to follow, or at the very least, its foundations are laid by directing people toward a mysterious deity in a general sense. It is as if it is destined for humanity that the sun of civilization shall not shine

upon it unless its gaze extends beyond earthly life—beyond its immediate era. When man discovers the full reality of his existence, he simultaneously uncovers the highest meanings of the things over which his genius prevails and with which he interacts."

The Unrestrained Instinct—A Beast That Plunges Society into the Night of History:

This perceptual image illustrates the state of weakened religious influence over the restraint instincts of humanity, signaling the end of a civilization's cycle. Bennabi states (Conditions of the Renaissance, 1986, pp. 69–70). "Thus, the instinct, once restrained by the religious idea, continues its pursuit of liberation and release, gradually, nature regains dominance over both the individual and society. When this liberation reaches its completion, the third stage of civilization begins—the stage of instinct, which reveals its true face entirely. At this point, the religious idea loses its social function and becomes utterly incapable of fulfilling its role in a disintegrating society that has irreversibly entered the night of history, therefore, the cycle of civilization comes to its conclusion."

• jahiliyyah (Ignorance) is Idolatry, Just as Idolatry is Ignorance:

This perceptual image highlights the danger of ignorance when it rejects ideas. Bennabi states (Conditions of the Renaissance, 1986, p. 28): "If idolatry is considered ignorance in the view of Islam, then ignorance itself is, in essence, a form of idolatry—because it does not cultivate ideas, but rather erects idols, and this is the very nature of ignorance."

3.3.2 Perceptual Images from the Realm of Ideas:

These are images derived from the context of speech and the arrangement of ideas surrounding a particular issue, they are numerous, and here are some examples:

The vastness of Qur'anic themes in encompassing all dimensions of existence:

Bennabi states (The Qur'anic Phenomenon, 2000, p. 195): "*The breadth and diversity of Quranic themes is something unique, according to the Quran's own words: 'We have neglected nothing in the Book'* (Al-An'am, verse 38). It begins its discourse from 'a speck of existence hidden within a rock, settled in the depths of the seas' to 'the star swimming in its orbit towards its known destination'. It explores the darkest corners of the human heart, penetrating the souls of both the believer and the disbeliever with an insight that grasps the subtlest emotions within. It extends toward humanity's distant past and its future to teach it the duties of life, portraying a captivating picture of successive civilizations before calling upon us to reflect and learn from their consequences. Its moral teachings stem from a deep psychological understanding of human nature, describing the flaws it forbids and warns against, as well as the virtues it calls us to emulate through the lives of the prophets—those heroes and martyrs in the epic of record heaven. Upon this basis, the Qur'an urges the believer toward sincere repentance by promising forgiveness, the very basis of penal education in heavenly religions.

The monotheistic democratic project views man as honored by the Creator even before his birth:

Bennabi states (Reflections, 2002, p. 91): "Undoubtedly, the fundamental valuation of man, upon which the democratic project in Islam was built, is the core reason behind the transformation that turned theoretical principles into tangible social realities. Before Umar Ibn Al-Khattab issued the regulation regarding nursing mothers, which we previously mentioned—before the ruler even made his decree—there was already within man that moment of self-reflection, a review of conscience, from which arose that cry recorded in history through the words of Ibn Al-Khattab himself: 'Woe to Umar! How many children of the Muslims has he caused to die?' (...) The infant still suckling at his mother's breast, in Umar's eyes, was nothing less than a fully realized man, or rather, a prospective citizen. The Caliph did not merely see in him his humanity or the mere presence of society embodied in his person; he saw far more than that. He saw in him the presence of an inestimable value—one placed within his very essence by God before he was even born into this world, a value divinely ordained on the day Adam was honored."

Islam was the cause for the tension that unleashed the hand, mind, and heart, setting civilization into motion:

Bennabi states (Reflections, 2002, p. 40): "Thus, when studying a society, we must examine its condition within specific circumstances. The Arab society before the Quranic era was vastly different from what it became afterward. If we assess its productivity over the four-thousand-year period from

the time of Ishmael to the Prophet Muhammad—peace be upon him—we find it reduced to little more than ten *Mu‘allaqat* (pre-Islamic odes). This indicates that the social energies—those of the heart, mind, and hand—were in a state devoid of the social tension that drives production with vigor and intensity, yet, when Islam arrived, it managed to build a civilization within half a century. This means that Islam introduced the driving forces necessary for the hand, mind, and heart to work in harmony, creating a civilization that radiated with influence.”

3.3.2 Perceptual Images from the Realm of People:

What was a behavior and attitude at a specific time and place, of which we have selected many, whether it was issued by the author, or a story in the form of a human model that represents the abstract idea, or in the form of the events of a fictional or realistic story that collectively represents the abstract idea (Qutb, *Artistic Imagery in the Quran*, 2014, pp. 47, 52).

The Sufi Commits Suicide by Escaping His Civilizational Responsibilities Through Litanies and Prayer Beads:

A perceptual image highlighting the phenomenon of a Muslim society losing the element of tension and purpose in life, leading it toward passive mysticism. Bennabi states (*Reflections*, 2002, p. 44): “*There is no doubt that if we were to study Islamic history in light of these considerations, we would find that the Islamic society faced a crisis of losing its driving forces from an early stage. Reform movements that emerged in various forms within it were expressions of this crisis, including Sufism, which, to some extent, represents the negative impulses that drive an individual who has lost the meaning of life toward self-destruction. The Sufi, too, departs from the natural order of life, freeing himself from its responsibilities through litanies and prayer beads, just as an ordinary suicide frees himself from his responsibilities with a dagger. The Sufi commits suicide by means of the spirit.*”

The Difference between a Man Who Overcomes the Gloom of Solitude by Designing Objects and Another Who Does So by Designing Ideas:

A perceptual image that illustrates the material and unseen dimensions of humanity’s search for happiness, based on the stories of Robinson Crusoe and Hayy ibn Yaqdhan, where the characters shared similar spatial and temporal circumstances, they differed in how they occupied themselves to escape isolation. Bennabi considers each story to reflect its respective society and cultural model (*The Problem of Ideas in the Muslim World*, 1970, pp. 17, 22). He states: “One either looks down at one’s feet, toward the earth, or raises one’s gaze toward the sky. The first approach fills one’s solitude with objects, as the dominant gaze seeks to possess them, while the second fills solitude with ideas, as the inquisitive gaze searches for truth. Through these two approaches, two cultural models emerge: a culture of domination, rooted in technical prowess, and a culture of civilization, rooted in ethics and unseen (...). Robinson Crusoe overcomes the gloom of solitude through labor, throughout that day, his entire world of thought is concentrated on an object—the table he wants to craft for himself. [Whereas] Hayy ibn Yaqdhan does not escape the gloom of solitude by building a table but by constructing and discovering ideas. His world is not one where time is defined by the pursuit of an object but by the pursuit of meaning.”

A Woman Representing the Tension of Conscience in an Emerging Society:

A perceptual image that highlights a practical manifestation of how moral tension shapes individual ethics (Bennabi, *Reflections*, 2002, p. 44). He states: “What are the signs of tension in this newly emerging society? One such sign appears in behavior, embodied by a woman whose conscience was filled with tension, as she came to Muhammad—peace be upon him—demanding that the punishment for adultery be carried out upon her, despite the secrecy surrounding her act. Yet her inner tension would not let her rest; she insisted with remarkable persistence. The Prophet—peace be upon him—turned her away, for she was pregnant, telling her to return after giving birth. Once she had delivered her child, she came back, once again demanding the punishment, her wakeful conscience and deeply rooted moral tension driving her insistence. Finally, the punishment was carried out, and thus, the memory of a woman who exemplified the tension of conscience in a nascent society was immortalized. Even Arab society at the time did not fully grasp the significance of this moral tension, which is evident in the reaction of some individuals when the Prophet—peace be upon him—performed the funeral prayer for her. To their astonishment, he responded with words to the

effect of: 'She has repented with a repentance so immense that if it were distributed among the people of Medina, it would have been enough for them all.'

Discussion

Many modern studies in the field of dialectic theology have agreed on the necessity of renewal in both methodology and style (Naffati, 2011, pp. 72, 75). The perceptual image serves as a methodological tool capable of bridging methodology—due to its cognitive function—and style, given its figurative nature. For Bennabi, the perceptual image is more than just an aesthetic or stylistic device; it is an epistemic necessity, which stems from the complex reality in which Muslims live—a reality that demands a high level of synthesis to address the existential questions challenging religious thought at its core. But what are the obstacles that have hindered perceptual images from being fully effective in theological discourse? What challenges, according to Bennabi, does this discourse face?

4.1.0 The Crisis of Verbalism and the Challenges of the Visual Age

4.1.1 The Verbalist Tendency in Theological Discourse:

The absence of a practical logic in dealing with revelation is a fundamental cause of the Muslims' decline. This has resulted in two main manifestations: first, the dialectical tendency that has characterized dialectic speech, which led to a rupture between theological discourse and behavior; second, the literary and verbalist inclination that defined the reform movements and what Bennabi called *the post-Almohad man*. Bennabi states (*The Problem of Culture*, 2000, p. 87): "It may be said that the Islamic society lives according to the principles of the Quran. However, it is more accurate to say that it speaks according to the principles of the Quran, due to the absence of a practical logic in its Islamic conduct." He also points out that literalism and argumentation have become defining characteristics of the post-Almohad period in general and of reformist theological discourse in particular. This, he argues, is among the key reasons why the Muslim does not move toward civilization but instead lives in contradictions with his faith and principles. The Muslim does not need to be presented with a doctrine he already knows; rather, he needs it to be activated within his consciousness so that he feels it and allows it to guide his behavior (*The Muslim World's Orientation*, 1988, p. 54)

The danger of the literary tendency is not only that it fails to drive action but also that it hinders the Muslim's ability to perceive his true reality. Bennabi states (*The Muslim World's Orientation*, 1988, p. 59): "The Arab genius has created the most beautiful language in the world, yet in its relationship with its own creation, it behaves like a sculptor infatuated with his own statue. The infatuation with words is more perilous than the infatuation with metal, marble, or stone, for it leads first and foremost to the loss of the ability to assess matters correctly, which is essential for any positive effort toward construction." He then intensifies the scene with a perceptual image that encapsulates the situation: "The tyranny of words and phrases gives any interpretation of renaissance a superficial character." Once this conceptual tyranny of words spread among lecturers and listeners, as Bennabi notes (*The Muslim World's Orientation*, 1988, pp. 59–60): "The living truths that once shaped the face of Islamic civilization have turned into lifeless truths buried in eloquent phrases and abundant knowledge (...). Any lesson in exegesis allows us to observe the triviality of our current culture, which has been enslaved by words, no longer reflecting a concern for action but merely a craving for speech." This approach not only erases the past but also destroys the present. As Bennabi explains (*The Muslim World's Orientation*, 1988, p. 61): "It has propagated a refined literalism, giving the illusion that one can change the conditions of life by teaching people to appreciate the 'things' of Islamic civilization and the eloquence of Arabic literature."

4.1.2 The Age of the Perceptual Image:

Civilizational studies indicate that our current era is the age of the image, as humanity has passed through three distinct modes of knowledge: the age of text, the age of symbol, and the age of image (Devlin, 2001, pp. 18–19). The age of text was represented by the manuscript, which served as the strongest carrier of knowledge, fulfilling the civilizational roles required by humans in their social, political, emotional, and historical lives. This was akin to the pre-Islamic ode, which played a crucial role in praise, satire, love, and weeping over ruins. It was followed by the age of symbol, which emerged as a result of logical reflection on knowledge, leading to the development of mathematical

and logical languages and the encoding of knowledge (Babaami & Kouzi, *From Latency to Civilizational Action: The Question of the Relationship Between Thought and Action*, 2015, pp. 41–42).

If Malek Bennabi spoke of the post-Almohad world and summarized its characteristics as textuality, verbalism, and a literary inclination, other studies point to a post-Ottoman world with more complex features in addition to those of the post-Almohad era. The most prominent of these characteristics is the shift from material colonization to intellectual and ideological colonization, and from a world of villages, cities, and hamlets to one of globalization, a single global village, and the media machine (Kouzi, 2015, pp. 149–150). In this new context, communication and entertainment platforms function as intellectual tanks that invade perceptions and concepts, just as physical armies once invaded lands and geographic spaces in the post-Almohad era.

Among the classifications proposed by civilization scholars for this era is the "Third Wave Civilization," which refers to the era of postmodernity, instability, and the explosion of information—following humanity's passage through the agricultural age and then the industrial age, before settling in an era of instability and uncertainty (Toffler, 1990, p. 317). One of the fundamental reasons behind the astonishing rise of religious sects is that the third wave individual experiences a sense of emptiness and fragmentation, lost among scattered particulars, as life structures have crumbled and their cognitive framework has fractured. In response, they turn to religion to construct a comprehensive and complex life structure for themselves (Toffler, 1990, pp. 410–411). Religious sects, in turn, offer "meaning"—their core commodity—no matter how absurd it may seem. This "meaning" provides structure, a framework, a goal, and coherence to life, enabling individuals to reassemble their fragmented selves, escape chaos, and find stability. This is achieved through specific concepts and perceptual images that they repeat, shaping their lives accordingly (Toffler, 1990, p. 413).

4.2.0 The Perceptual Image as an Outcome

4.2.1 The Perceptual Image in the Qur'an

In his book *The Qur'anic Phenomenon*, Bennabi emphasizes the metaphorical and visual power of Qur'anic verses—not only from a rhetorical and figurative perspective but also in terms of their connection to a unified cosmic vision and their practical effectiveness. Given the importance of imagery in shaping perception of the unseen, visual representation constitutes three-quarters of the Qur'an, while the remaining quarter requires abstract mental reasoning, as seen in sections of argumentation and legislation (Qutb, *Artistic Imagery in the Qur'an*, 2014, p. 204). While meanings conveyed through direct statements reach the mind devoid of aesthetic nuances, the second approach, as Sayyid Qutb explains (*Scenes from the Resurrection in the Qur'an*, 2006, p. 8), "addresses the senses and emotions, reaching the soul through multiple channels: through imagery and rhythm to the senses, through the senses to perception, and through resonances and light to the heart. The intellect serves as only one among many gateways to the soul, rather than its sole and exclusive entry point."

4.2.2 The Cosmic Vision and Metaphor:

Bennabi establishes a clear and strong connection between metaphorical imagery and its cosmic background, emphasizing the cognitive role of metaphor. He calls for further exploration of the language employed by the Qur'an in eschatological themes to uncover, as he describes (*The Qur'anic Phenomenon*, 2000, p. 192), "a vast domain where one can observe the expansive reach of the Qur'anic phenomenon (...) for it brought about a tremendous revolution in Arabic literature by transforming the artistic tool of expression. On one hand, it replaced the structured prose sentence with the metered verse, and on the other, it introduced a new concept that brought with it fresh ideas and themes (...) to connect the pre-Islamic mentality with the current of monotheism. These concepts, however, are not merely translated into Qur'anic verses; rather, the Qur'an assimilated them, internalized them, and then adapted them to suit the Arab intellect."

If Bennabi strongly advocated for the influence of reality in shaping an individual's perceptual image of the unseen, El-Messiri, in contrast, argued for the impact of the perceptual image of the unseen on reality, and both defended the unique structure of the Qur'anic perceptual image. Qur'anic metaphors of the unseen are characterized by indeterminacy while maintaining a fixed center, unlike

Christian metaphors, which are defined by determinacy and a dispersed final reference and center (El-Messiri, Dialogues with Dr. Abdelwahab El-Messiri: Culture and Method, 2010, p. 359).

The perceptual image serves as both a sign of the human inability to fully grasp the Qur'anic text and a testament to the text's evocative power across various contexts. When the perceptual image integrates with the human intellect, it draws upon prior knowledge, cognitive predispositions, and environmental conditions, generating solutions that address reality. In this way, the Qur'anic text remains an enduring source of solutions across all times and places (Babaami, In Love with the Words of God, 2018, p. 145).

4.3.0 Epistemological Integration across Disciplines

Modern dialectic theology calls for the renewal and adaptation of inferential research tools to align with the complexity of reality (Abd al-Rahman, 2000, p. 158). The classical approach was predominantly influenced by Cartesian rationalism, which treated belief as a purely intellectual proposition requiring a logical foundation.

Malek Bennabi, however, employed multiple methodologies in his analyses of the human phenomenon, a fact evident in his incorporation of various scientific fields closely related to perceptual images (Bouchaa'la, 2023, p. 17). The study of perceptual images fundamentally relies on interdisciplinarity, as it deals with the formation of reality perception. This necessitates an integrated, cross-disciplinary approach for two main reasons: the complex nature of perception itself and the inherently multifaceted nature of reality. Contemporary methodological studies converge on the necessity of epistemological integration, particularly given the structural complexity of the Third Wave era. The fragmentation-based methodologies of the Second Wave have proven entirely inadequate in providing effective solutions (Toffler, 1990, pp. 331–333).

4.4.0 Analytical Models of Perceptual Images in Creed:

The process of analysis begins with identifying the images present in the text, then establishing connections between them to determine their meaning within the given context. This is followed by abstracting the epistemological model that emerges from the collective images and finally reading the text as a cohesive whole (El-Messiri, Dialogues with Dr. Abdelwahab El-Messiri: Culture and Method, 2010, p. 358) to uncover the ultimate dimensions of these images, the classification of doctrinal issues, as proposed by Badawi (Badawi, 2009, pp. 65–67), is employed. This classification consists of:

The first category, which addresses matters related to Allah Almighty and religion, such as the proof of His existence, the finality of prophethood, the issue of imamate, and the question of good and evil.

4.4.0 Analytical Models of Perceptual Images in Doctrine:

The process of analysis begins with identifying the images present in the text, then establishing connections between them to determine their meaning within the given context. This is followed by abstracting the epistemological model that emerges from the collective images and finally reading the text as a cohesive whole (El-Messiri, Dialogues with Dr. Abdel Wahab El-Messiri: Culture and Method, 2010, p. 358).

To uncover the ultimate dimensions of these images, the classification of doctrinal issues, as proposed by Badawi (Badawi, 2009, pp. 65–67), is employed. This classification consists of:

- The first category, which addresses matters related to Allah Almighty and religion, such as the proof of His existence, the finality of prophethood, the issue of imamate, and the problem of good and evil.
- The second category, which deals with issues concerning humans and religion, such as reason and faith, the humanistic nature of religion, and questions of freedom.
- The final category, which explores issues related to nature and religion, such as the relationship between the soul and the body, religion and science.

The following are the stages of analysis:

1. Extracting the Central Perceptual Image – This is the core image under which other partial images converge, all contributing to the same perceptual meaning.

2. Extracting the Peripheral Perceptual Images – These clarify one or more aspects of the central perceptual image.

3. Deriving Dimensions and Characteristics – This stage highlights the final epistemological dimensions of the image by revealing elements of the monotheistic worldview and examining the reasons behind its conceptual strength.

4.

4.4.2 Perceptual Image Models on the Role of Creed in the Civilizational Framework:

Central Perceptual Image	Secondary Perceptual Image
The Civilizational Framework: human + soil + time	(Bennabi, Conditions of the Renaissance, 1986, pp. 45, 46) "Water is in fact a product of hydrogen and oxygen, although they do not form it spontaneously, it is said that the formation of water is subject to a certain law that requires the intervention of a certain (compound), without which the process of water formation would not take place."
	(Bennabi, Conditions of the Renaissance, 1986, pp. 45, 46) "To build a civilization is not by accumulating products, but by solving these three issues at their root."
Embryonic Stage and the Moment of Birth	"The spiritual relationship between God and man is what gives birth to social relationships." (Bennabi, The Birth of a Society, 1986).
	"It is as if man's destiny is that the sun of civilization will not shine upon him unless his gaze extends beyond his earthly life." (Bennabi, The Birth of a Society, 1986, p. 51).
Tension of conscience	"It is the cry of the soul that has been freed from the shackles of instincts after doctrine had completely taken control over them in the self of Bilal ibn Rabah. Likewise, the Islamic society was governed by this very transformation." (Bennabi, The Conditions of the Renaissance, 1986, p. 67).
	"... It follows behind the footsteps of a savior who defines its goals so clearly that it seems as if it can see and touch them—just as the companions at Badr saw paradise as close as a handspan from them. Some of them would even throw away a handful of dates they were eating to rush into battle, because paradise appeared closer to them than the dates in their hands. [Hitler played the same role when he fulfilled all the conditions for rescuing Germany.] The savior of the German people was Hitler, who led them into the sea... but the waves swallowed him, for he did not wield the staff of prophethood." (Bennabi, Reflections, 2002, pp. 136–137).
	"The third stage of civilization begins—the stage of instinct, which fully reveals its face. At this point, the social function of religious thought comes to an end, becoming completely incapable of fulfilling its role in a disintegrating society that has entered definitively into the night of history, thus completing a cycle in civilization." (Bennabi, The Conditions of the Renaissance, 1986, pp. 69–70).

Dimensions and Characteristics:

- Perceptual and mental images address the theological stance on determinism and free will, represented by historical determinism in the interpretation of history. They highlight a domain of stability and immutable laws, alongside a domain of causality entrusted to human action, will, and responsibility—manifested in the choice of religiosity.

- These images reveal the integration between the metaphysical-religious dimension and the material-worldly dimension, as well as the role each plays in shaping civilization.

- They express the deep connection between the elements of the worldview (*Allah–man–universe*) and the impact of one's stance toward God on both the individual and their relationship with the universe.
- They explore behavioral science issues, such as the duality of soul and body, mind and self, and the influence of doctrine in directing each component toward generating positive outcomes.
- They examine the impact of religious conceptions on social transformations.
- A strong correlation emerges between the laws governing the material world—such as those in electricity and chemistry—and the laws governing human phenomena, without overlap between them.
- They emphasize the true role of religion in guiding the details of daily life, affirming the fundamental connection between righteous action and its faith-based foundation. They highlight that morality cannot exist outside a religious framework and underscore the role of faith in shaping a character capable of bearing the burdens of practical obligations and their consequences.

4.4.2 Perceptual Image Models on the Danger of the Western Background of the World of Ideas:

Central Perceptual Image	Secondary Perceptual Image
From childhood and the world of things to adulthood and the world of ideas	Old age is a decline from the world of ideas to the world of people, then to the world of objects. (<i>Bennabi, The Problem of Ideas in the Muslim World, 1970, p. 26</i>)
	Drawing inspiration from the events of <i>Hayy ibn Yaqdhan</i> , one can compare it with its Western counterpart, <i>Robinson Crusoe</i> , which shares similar events. (<i>Bennabi, The Problem of Ideas in the Muslim World, 1970, pp. 17, 22</i>). "One either looks around at their feet, toward the earth, or lifts their gaze toward the sky. The first approach fills one's solitude with objects, where their dominant gaze strives to possess them. The second fills one's solitude with ideas, prompting them to seek truth with a questioning vision (...). Robinson Crusoe overcomes the melancholy of isolation through work. (...) Hayy ibn Yaqdhan does not overcome his loneliness by making a table, but by constructing and discovering ideas. In his world, time is not determined in favor of something."
	We must observe a child struggling with a small problem to appreciate the effort—sometimes accompanied by despair—of breaking into the world of ideas. These small tragedies often go unnoticed by families and schools. However, a child sometimes recalls that, after repeatedly facing a difficulty without overcoming it, their thought and intellect eventually reveal a way to conquer it. They find the solution on their own. At that moment, for the child, it is an 'Archimedean moment'—they can shout 'Eureka!' just as Archimedes did. This moment, usually between the ages of seven and eight, marks their entry into the world of ideas, unaided by others. This step is crucial in their progressive integration into society, as it roots them in an authentic cultural environment, shaping them into either a <i>Hayy ibn Yaqdhan</i> or a <i>Robinson Crusoe</i> . (<i>Bennabi, The Problem of Ideas in the Muslim World, 1970, p. 26</i> .)
	"Man's honor lies in his connection to the divine idea, not in his world of objects." (<i>Bennabi, The Conditions of the Renaissance, 1986, p. 40</i>) (A Symbolic Ode: "From Accumulation to Construction").
	(<i>Bennabi, The Problem of Ideas in the Muslim World, 1970, p. 13, 64</i>): "Thus, its inherited dead ideas and the deadly ideas uprooted from their Western

“Deadly thoughts”	origins combined to take revenge on this world, just as a poorly built bridge takes revenge by collapsing on those who constructed it."
	(Bennabi, The Destination of the Muslim World, 1988, p. 80): "Not every component of blood can replace another, nor among its different types, as their organic differences are essentially due to differences in bodies. This biological truth also applies to the organic and historical aspects."
The idolatry of ignorance	(Bennabi, The Conditions for Renaissance, 1986, p. 28): "And if polytheism, in the view of Islam, is ignorance, then ignorance in its essence is polytheism, because it does not plant ideas, but erects idols, and this is the nature of ignorance."
	(Bennabi, The Conditions for Renaissance, 1986, p. 36): "The essence of the issue is our intellectual problem, and we are still walking with our heads on the ground and our feet in the air. This inversion of circumstances is the new manifestation of our renaissance problem."

Dimensions and Characteristics:

- The world of ideas clearly highlights the duality of matter and spirit, with the honor and status of the spirit compared to the material and the individual.
- Literary arts, such as storytelling and symbolic hymns, are key tools used by Bennabi to solidify a perceptual image around a specific subject.
- The image is intensified by linking levels of differentiation between the three worlds and the characteristics of human developmental stages, giving the classification a high degree of coherence and interpretability, indicating the presence of order and shared wisdom across various levels of human existence, both material and spiritual.
- One of the features of the perceptual image's strong influence is its connection to psychological sensations and their ultimate dimensions of existence.
- The images contain direct educational projections, both at the individual and institutional levels.
- The perceptual image emphasizes the clear paradox: the originality of Islamic thought in its intellectual depth, even if it conflicts with its material reality, and the crisis of Western thought in its superficiality, even if it advances in its civilizational reality.

Perceptual Image on Culture, Network of Relationships, and Effectiveness:

- One of the perceptual images was inspired by the verse: "*Who is better guided: someone who falls on his face, or someone who walks steadily on a straight path?*" (Al-Mulk:23).
- The logic of the struggle between nations and the clash of civilizations is clearly visible at the level of ideas.
- The fine and sensitive characteristics from the field of "blood transfusion" have been drawn in the process of transferring the tools of one civilization to another.
- The close relationship between science and religion in dialectic theology, and that they are necessarily intertwined, with strong evidence from pre-Islamic history and real-world events.
- The authenticity, origin, and high standing of the monotheistic vision in matters of civilization, and the warning against the danger of the inherent relationship between means and their final reference.
- Ignorance is a characteristic of the state of ignorance (Jahiliyyah) and the time before revelation, while knowledge is a characteristic of Islam because it is the source of revelation.
- The representation of abstract meanings in tangible forms makes the dimensions of the idea transparent and impactful.

4.4.3 Perceptual Image about Culture, Network of Relations, and Effectiveness:

Central Perceptual Image	Secondary Perceptual Image
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Culture is an environment and surroundings	(Bennabi, Reflections, 2002, p. 135) "An equation that represents the essence of a human being made by the One who masters everything he creates, and a second equation that represents him as a social being shaped by society."
	(Bennabi, Conditions of Renaissance, 1986, p. 85) "Culture – with its religious idea that has organized the human epic in all its stages since Adam – should not be considered as a science learned by humans, but rather as an environment surrounding them, a framework within which they move, nourishing civilization within its depths. It is the medium in which all the characteristics of a civilized society are formed, and in which each detail of its parts is shaped according to the highest goal that society has set for itself, including the blacksmith, the artist, the shepherd, the scholar, the Imam, and so on. Thus, history is constructed."
Relationships are a network of threads that carry the civilization of society	(Bennabi, The Birth of a Society, 1986, p. 40) "Social relations become corrupted when the individuals' selves become inflated, making collective, shared work difficult or impossible. At this point, the discussion no longer aims at finding solutions to problems, but rather at finding evidence and proofs. In a healthy situation, addressing problems is for the purpose of solving them, but in a diseased situation, addressing them becomes an opportunity for the self to swell and puff up. At that point, solving the problem becomes impossible, not because of a lack of ideas or things, but because the network of relations no longer functions naturally."
	(Bennabi, The Birth of a Society, 1986, p. 40) "If a society develops in any way, this development is recorded both in quantity and quality within its network of relations... And when the tension in the network's threads loosens, making it incapable of conducting joint activity effectively, this is a sign that the society is sick and heading toward its end."
Effectiveness is a path that begins with work and ends with the afterlife	(Bennabi, Conditions of Renaissance, 1986, p. 17) "The worker is a symbol of the hope of civilization, the victory of the idea, and the fall of the idols of ignorance and paganism. A symbolic anthem 'The Present and History.'"
	(Bennabi, Conditions of Renaissance, 1986, p. 106) "When the first Muslims were building their first mosque in Medina, this was the first arena of work in which Islamic civilization was created. If we look at this arena in its simplicity and its insignificance at that time, we might smile at the scene, but didn't the builders of Islamic civilization receive the lessons of work there?! Didn't they grasp the stick of history for the first time there?"
	(Bennabi, Reflections, 2002, p. 158) "If some modern societies today build for purely social goals and entirely earthly life – and I do not underestimate these goals, but I acknowledge that they are halfway there – then our society builds for life beyond life, for objectives it achieves for the life of every individual. This, of course, requires from the Muslim and the Arab an effort greater than that of others and a struggle greater than theirs."

Dimensions and characteristics:

- The images address the issue of human dignity, emphasizing that a person is honored first in their essence and then in what they excel at, in contrast to the materialistic view that measures a person by their productivity.
- The images highlight the inseparable integration of the material and spiritual aspects in human upbringing.
- The perceptual images have given culture the concept of a worldview that shapes a person's perception of the world and behavior through their stance on Allah Almighty, humanity, and the universe.

- The effectiveness of culture is not linked to the quantity of information but to its transcendent reference and its power to shape the social environment.
- Bennabi considered self-discipline and self-denial as the primary causes for the formation of social networks, which relates to the science of behavioral purification.
- Bennabi denied the possibility of knowledge formation in the absence of strong social ties, which connects to the sociology of knowledge.
- The images illustrate the systematic and causal relationship between the decline of religious conscience and the fall of civilization.
- From an Islamic perspective, knowledge is fundamentally inseparable from action.
- The images provided new dimensions for reading the Prophet's biography, such as its practical and civilizational aspects.
- The embodiment and personification of ideas make them more impactful, as seen in the image of ignorance and idolatry.
- The images emphasize the practical and civilizational role that demands greater effort from a Muslim compared to a non-Muslim due to the higher purpose and ultimate objective.

It became evident from the above discussion how effective the perceptual image is in highlighting the religious idea in Bennabi's thought, as well as its methodological features, characteristics, and advantages. Additionally, two fundamental issues emerged concerning the importance of the perceptual image in activating faith:

- Despite the crucial role of the perceptual image in shaping a comprehensive vision of the worldview and its fundamental pillars, it is insufficient for establishing the finer details and specifics of belief. However, this is not a flaw but rather an inherent feature of the perceptual image's structure. Its absence would mean the absence of the perceptual image itself, for if it contained detailed specifics, it would lose its ability to encompass the holistic and comprehensive vision. (Lakoff & Johnson, 2009, p. 31).

The impact of the perceptual image fundamentally relies on the recipient's linguistic and imaginative capacity, as it heavily draws on artistic elements. As stated by Lakoff and Johnson (2009, p. 219): *"It is not only connected to thought but also encompasses all the natural dimensions of our experience, including sensory aspects such as color, shape, substance, and sound, among others. These dimensions do not merely structure our sensory experience but also shape our aesthetic experience."* This characteristic presents a challenge for the perceptual image in terms of the recipient's linguistic and expressive ability. Bennabi himself, regretfully, acknowledged his inability to grasp much of the Qur'anic eloquence, which prevented him from fully exploring its intellectual and civilizational horizons. He said in *The Quranic Phenomenon* (2000, p. 63): *"Thus, I find myself bewildered, helpless, and without means in a matter that is of the utmost importance to me as a Muslim."* This paper raises the question: How can a generation whose artistic taste has been manipulated by commercialized media and entertainment be able to comprehend the parables and images that Allah has sent to them in the Quran?

Conclusion

The perceptual image is an essential tool and method for shaping a holistic worldview and organizing perceptions in an era of mental fragmentation—often referred to as the civilization of the third wave. In intellectual writing, the perceptual image serves as the core of an idea and its practical conceptual essence. Finding and formulating it is like discovering a map of intertwined, winding paths, as it provides a meaningful refuge to protect modern humans from fragmentation, absurdity, and uncertainty.

Through the perceptual image, Bennabi was able to bridge two seemingly distant elements: the philosophical and epistemological foundation and the apparent, detailed aspects. He employed the perceptual image as condensed visualizations of what he analyzed in detail. It can be said that Bennabi dissects the civilizational scene and then reassembles it into a vivid artistic painting, displaying it before the reader's eyes to prevent them from getting lost in details and to inspire them to take action.

The dominance of the world of objects is evident in the types of perceptual images he used—an influence clearly stemming from his technical background before engaging in civilizational studies. Bennabi employed rigid, technical material images to express the consistency and systematic nature of civilization formation. Conversely, he used broad, abstract images when discussing responsibility, will, and choice, as these aspects vary based on individual understanding and capacity for commitment and performance.

Bennabi made extensive use of perceptual images at different levels: from partial metaphors, where there is a direct comparison between two elements (which is most common), to mental images where the compared element is an abstract idea, and finally to perceptual images where the compared element is a general principle. This is particularly evident in some of his book titles, such as *Between Guidance and Misguidance* and *The Birth of a Society*, as well as in symbolic anthems that introduce certain chapters and sections.

The paper proposes the following research topics:

- Reformulating Bennabi's intellectual material through the perspective of central and peripheral perceptual images, analyzing their characteristics and conceptual dimensions.
- Extracting perceptual images from all his books and transforming them into illustrations to be included in new editions of his works and utilized for educational purposes, given the civilizational, practical, and pedagogical depth that characterizes most of his perceptual images.

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